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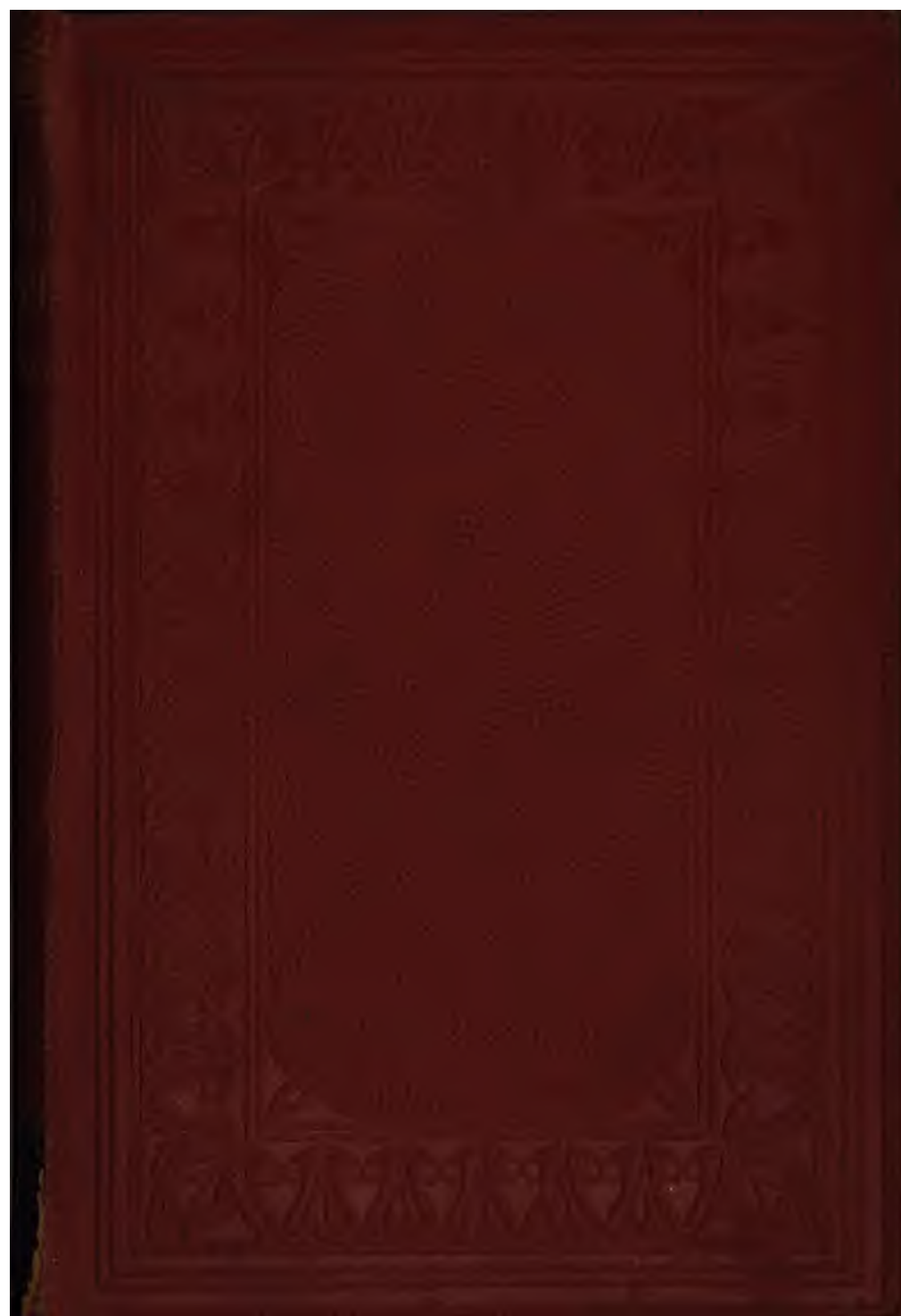
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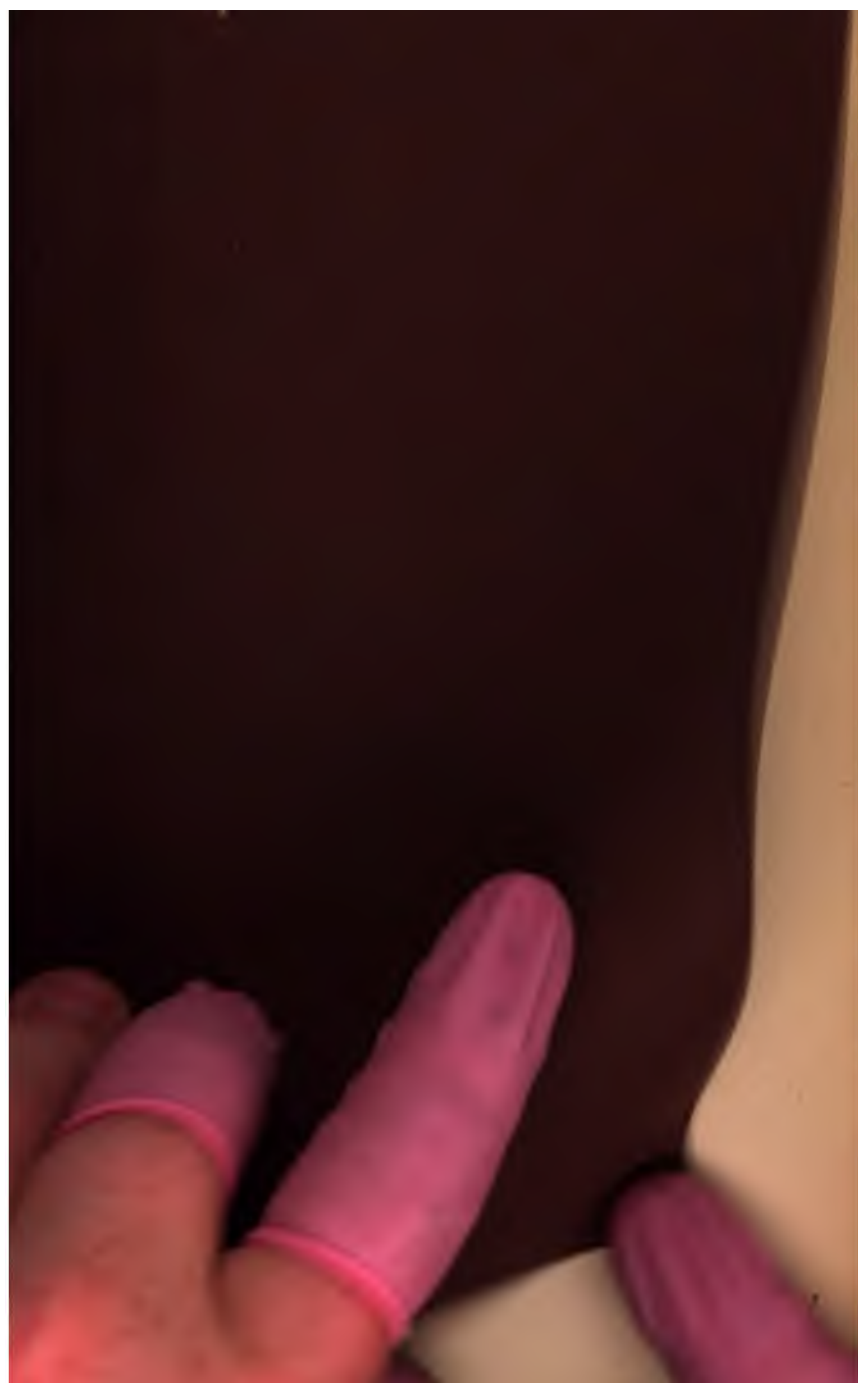
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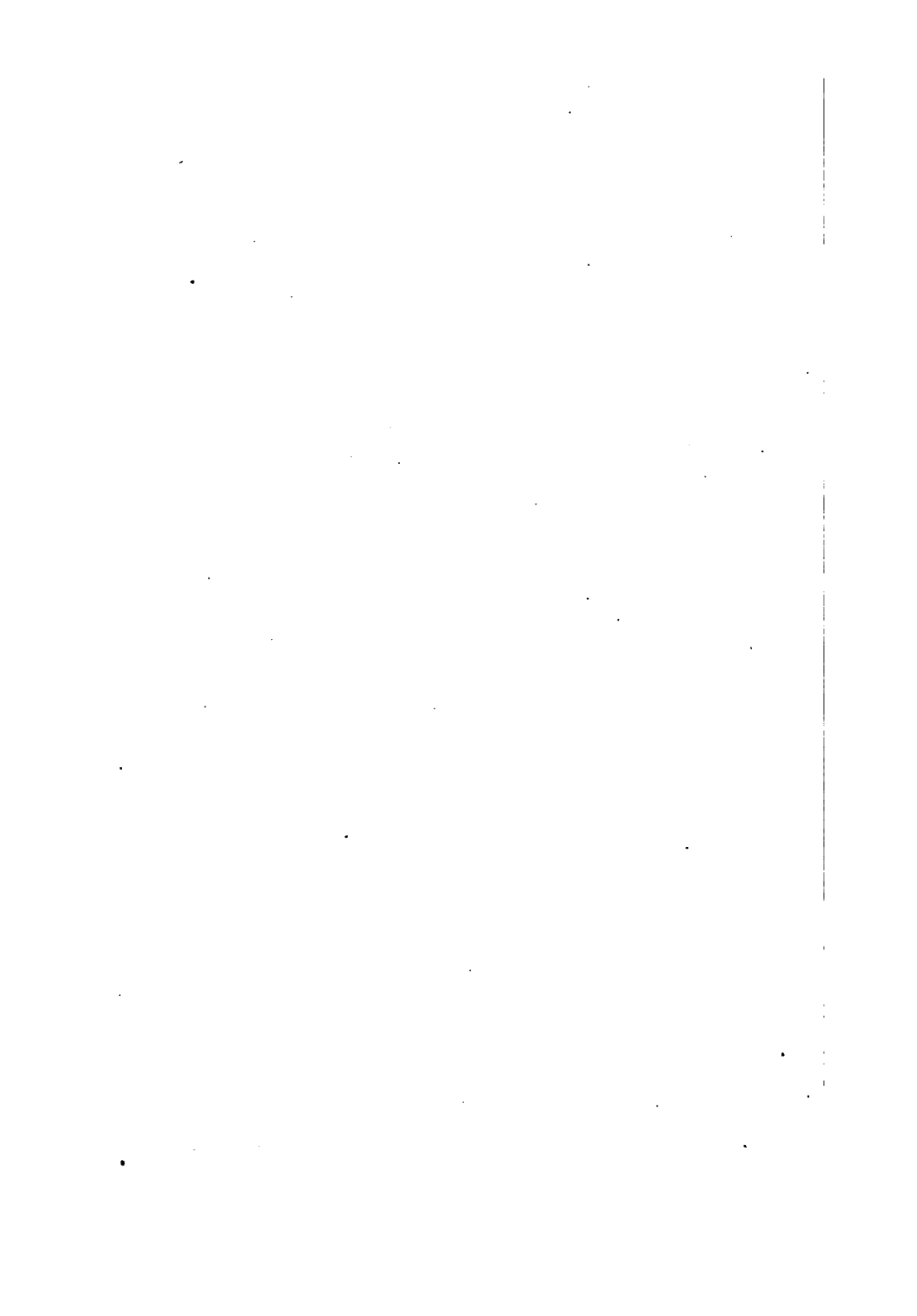
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A Prize Essay

ON THE

PASTORAL CHARACTER AND PASTORAL WORK.

BY

F. R. WYNNE, A.B.,

INCUMBENT OF ST. MARY'S, KILKENNY.



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"The night cometh when no man can work."—JOHN ix. 4.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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TWO PRIZES of One Hundred Guineas and Fifty Guineas respectively, having been offered by a private gentleman, anxious to promote the greater efficiency of the Established Church, for the two best Essays on the working of the Parochial System, notice of which was extensively advertised, and forty-three Essays having been sent in and submitted to the examination of the adjudicators, namely, Rev. CANON MILLER, D.D., of Birmingham, Rev. GEO. SIDNEY SMITH, D.D., Professor of Biblical Greek in the University of Dublin, and Rev. WM. PENNEFATHER, B.A., Incumbent of St. Jude's, Islington, London, the first Prize was unanimously awarded to the author of the Essay signed "The Pentathlete," by the Rev. J. B. Heard, A.M., of Harrogate, now issued under the title of "The Pastor and the Parish." The second Prize was awarded to an Essay signed "F. R. W.," by Rev. F. R. Wynne, Incumbent of St. Mary's, Kilkenny, and is published under the title of "The Model Parish." These Volumes are now sent forth with prayer, that the Divine blessing may accompany their perusal, and that much good may, through their instrumentality, result to the Church and to the world.

DECEMBER, 1864.

## PREFACE.

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THE writer of this essay is aware that, in a literary point of view, it cannot bear severe criticism. It has been written in the few spare hours left, amidst the daily calls of busy parochial work. But, though, of necessity, penned hastily, it has been the subject of much thought and prayer, and all its suggestions have been drawn from actual experience in different spheres of ministerial labour. The author sends forth his little work, therefore, with diffidence, and yet with hope that it may be found helpful to his younger fellow-labourers — satisfied that the Lord should either use it as an instrument for His glory, or lay it aside to make room for stronger and better ones, according as seems good to His infinite wisdom.

DECEMBER 19, 1864.





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# THE MODEL PARISH.

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## PART I.—THE PASTOR.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

THE great business of a minister of the Gospel is to cause the Lord Jesus Christ to be known, trusted, loved, and followed by as many human beings as he can in any way reach. To be a proclaimer of Christ is his main office. He is indeed a teacher of the Scriptures, a guide and helper in holiness of life, a comforter in affliction, a sympathising friend and counsellor to his people at all times ; but the peculiar and special work to which he is appointed is to present the Person of the Lord Jesus to the souls of men—to present Him as the ground of their hope, the object of their love, and the goal of their desires. Utterly impossible, then, would it be for any one to be an “able minister of the New Testament,” unless he himself had a personal knowledge of that Saviour

whom he is to preach. Many other qualifications are very important for one who is commissioned to "feed the Church of God;" but this lies at the bottom of all—he must himself know Christ as his Saviour; he must himself honour Him as his Lord; he must himself love Him as his Friend, before he can go abroad and preach Him with any reality.

This truth has been, thank God, (especially of late years,) so continually pressed upon those who undertake the office of the ministry, that it is needless to dwell much upon it directly here. I am anxious to pass on from known and recognised fundamentals to such practical hints as, not being so familiar, may be of more real use to our younger fellow-labourers.

I should wish it, however, to be distinctly felt, as an under-current running through all I write, that the great thing to give life and warmth to the minister's efforts, is that they should proceed from a heart deeply in earnest in its own personal relationship with the Saviour. There may be many differences of degree in the conscious emotions of love, or the power of realising the Lord's presence—differences of degree varying possibly according to differences of natural character, according to more or less vivid powers of imagination, more or less fervid feelings—varying often in the same person at different times; but deep in the heart of every real pastor there must ever be a confiding in the Lord Jesus, as the soul's

own very Saviour, and a determination to die a thousand deaths rather than neglect His slightest wish.

This is at the beginning and foundation of all. But it is not only a thing to be settled at the beginning. Through every day of the minister's life the most essential part of his work is his heart-work with his Saviour. His own light must be shining brightly, or he will not be able to illuminate others. Just in proportion as he himself feels deeply the reality of the eternal future—the presence of God—the love and sympathy of the Redeemer, just in that proportion will he be able to go abroad, with burning words and heart-stirring appeals, to plead with the souls of his fellow-men.

And there is much in the exercise of the minister's office that tends to produce a certain externalness, and almost unreality in his character, and therefore makes this earnest heart-work more specially necessary.

The pastor has to go from house to house, and from person to person, saying the stirring words that he knows he ought to say, no matter what may be his individual feelings at the moment. And the saying these words over and over has a tendency to deaden the things they represent. Much handling takes away the bloom of the fruit and the freshness of the flower, and much speaking about the love of Christ, and heavenly hope, and spiritual progress, and peace

and joy in believing, does (unless there be prayerful watchfulness) most certainly interfere with the simplicity and purity of these very things in our own selves.

There is a danger also, of our being led to be satisfied with the earnestness of our words, in place of earnestness of feeling. While we have been full of enthusiasm in speaking of our Master, we can scarcely conceive that there could be any slackening of our own inward communion with Him, any swerving from single-minded devotion to His service. And yet such a thing is quite possible. The praise of our fellow-creatures—the desire of pleasing them and winning their affections, may have been gradually insinuating itself between our souls and Christ; His glory may have been becoming less and less the first object of our labours; His approval less and less the great reward sought for; and all the time His Name may have been constantly on our lips, spoken of always with the greatest fervour. Thus our own words may become instruments of self-deceit.

And the good opinion of others helps and fosters this tendency. A minister, if he is zealous and hard-working, and preaches those Gospel doctrines that meet the needs and longings of the human heart, is usually thought very highly of by his flock. And while we cannot help seeing that our people look upon us as deeply pious, and intensely devoted, it is not

easy to judge ourselves severely. Their opinion of us is apt gradually to become our own. Insensibly there steals over our minds the idea that we are indeed the devoted servants of Christ every one thinks us to be. And, alas! how much of self-seeking, how much of spiritual coldness, and spiritual pride may all the while be lurking within us, eating like a canker into the very heart of our religion.

On account, then, of these tendencies to unreality and self-deceit, peculiarly besetting the ministerial office, the minister peculiarly needs to be much in close personal communion with the Lord. There, at the fountain of all strength, he must seek continually new supplies of grace to freshen his soul's life. There, alone with his God, he must consider what he is working for, and how he is carrying on that work. There, face to face with the Eternal One, the shadows of human praise and earthly reward must shrink into their true insignificance; the great realities of his calling must stand out vividly before him. Feeling himself a redeemed, immortal being, commissioned by that God in whose presence he kneels, to spend and be spent in preparing the souls committed to his charge for their stupendous future, every other consideration must seem like nothing to him, and earnest promises (accompanied by passionate prayers), must be breathed forth, that forsaking all other studies, he will give himself wholly to this one thing, and con-

concentrate all his energies on the single work of saving souls.

Oh! what fresh life is communicated to the pastor's labours by an hour of such intercourse with his Muster! There is a warmth and attractiveness in his words as he goes out among his people, after it, that surprises himself. He is not now afraid of his fellow-men. He does not shrink as he was wont, from plain dealing with their hearts. He does not care so intensely about pleasing them; what he longs for is to benefit them. Difficulties that used to appear insuperable, now seem wonderfully diminished. Trouble that he disliked to think of, is now a labour of love. He feels he is going forth, sent by God, and accompanied by God—by that God who loves him with a love unspeakable; and so nothing can daunt him, nothing can chill him, nothing can discourage him.

And in the evening, after the day's mingled success and failure—after its labours and its faults, how is his weary soul refreshed, by coming and “telling all things to Jesus,” sure of His sympathy with his efforts—sure of His forgiveness for his failures.

## CHAPTER II.

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### LOVINGNESS OF CHARACTER.

LEAVING it as a settled fundamental principle that the main qualification for a minister of the Gospel is acquaintance with the Lord Jesus in his own heart, I pass on to other qualifications. And in a very prominent position I would place *lovingness of character*. There is no such engine for influencing the hearts of men as love. Few can resist its power. It is hard not to be moved by the words of a person who evidently loves you. And if a minister wishes for success, he should see that all his words are steeped in love.

When the pastor wrestles with the soul of the careless unbeliever, what is it that will give persistence to his efforts, so that he will not leave him till some impression has been made? When, in accordance with the commission he bears, he "boldly rebukes vice," what will soften the harshness of the warning without taking away from its honesty?

When he tries to comfort the mourners, what will give tenderness to his tone, sympathy to his countenance, and make his words, so weak in themselves,



like gentle angels of consolation? In guiding the young, supporting the feeble-minded, gladdening the aged, what will give him the key to retiring and timid hearts, and the happy tact to lead them wisely heavenwards?

To all these questions I answer, the one word—*love*. A real love in the pastor's heart for the individuals with whom he is dealing—a deep longing for their souls' salvation—a sorrowful sense of the awfulness of their danger—an affectionate sympathy with their condition—a delicate perception of their feelings, such as can only be produced by a "loving imagination." He must love them, or he cannot reach them. A sense of duty may urge him on to speak boldly and unweariedly; but there must be love to wing his words to the hearers' hearts.

There are men whose ministry, though in a certain sense faithful, fails sadly from want of this qualification. They stand up to preach the Gospel as if they were defying their people rather than inviting them. Their whole tone and manner seems to say—"This is the truth; you would like to contradict it, but you cannot." And in their private ministrations they carry out the same spirit. They enter the poor man's care-encumbered cottage as stern inquisitors, to question him as to his derelictions of duty, and denounce him for his vices. They sit in the rich man's house, with cold disapproval on their brows, as

if their only business there was to frown at his follies. Is it any wonder if a ministry carried on in such a spirit prove unfruitful? Is it any wonder if few souls be won by the teacher who has been trying to drive instead of to draw? When there is no love, the minister's words will be felt by the poor to be an intrusion—by the rich to be an impertinence.

And there is no use in trying to put on an appearance of love, when the thing itself is absent. You cannot have a really loving manner unless you have a loving heart. All attempts at imitating love are disgusting. You must have it, or it is worse than useless to affect it. For in this matter, as the reality is of all things the most attractive, the affectation of it is of all things the most repelling. Whence arise the sneers and caricatures about ministers with "oily manners," and "greasy smiles," but that the world, in its keen-sightedness, sees too often that an attempt is made to seem loving, and to address it in loving tones, when there is only coldness or selfishness within? It sees this and resents it; and in its indignation at the cheat comes to suspect and shrink from even the reality.

We must *be* loving, therefore, if we would be useful. We must labour to cultivate affectionate and sympathising feelings towards others. There is doubtless a great difference between natural dispositions in this respect. But Divine grace makes a

difference beside which all these natural ones are nothing. One of the infallible marks of the heart's being under the influence of God's Spirit is "love to the brethren." A certain feeble half-selfish amiability is by nature born with some human beings, but a strong holy love is given by God to all His new-created children. This gift, as ministers of the Gospel, we are specially bound to cultivate. How is this to be done? I need not say, first and chiefly by means of prayer. We must beseech our God to increase in us more and more warm loving feelings towards our fellow-creatures—to give us "a heart at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathise." Hating ourselves for having so little of this spirit—for feeling so indifferent often about the interests of others, so eager and excited about our own—we must cast ourselves before the throne of grace to pray for pardon for our selfishness, and for the help of His mighty power to battle it out of our hearts. And having prayed to be made loving, we must work hard to *become* loving. No easy instantaneous recipe can be given for the accomplishing of this. Steady watchful endeavours from day to day, and from year to year will be necessary.

I think it is a help often to fix the mind steadily upon the idea of eternity, and to try to realize the thought of seeing those with whom we have to do, either on the right or left side of the great Throne.

We do not care much for some of our fellow-creatures because they seem uninteresting. We feel them to be dull and commonplace. But if we could look upon them as immortal beings, they would at once become invested with a halo of interest. That stupid old farmer, who prosed on about his cattle and his crops—that tiresome tradesman, who expects you to listen again and again to his pointless stories—that wearisome old woman, who grumbles and whines and talks “*usque ad nauseam*” of her innumerable diseases—how are you ever to look upon such as these otherwise than as “bores” to be endured with as much patience as you can muster? By remembering that they are to live through endless ages either in heaven or in hell. When millions of centuries have whirled past, that face that now you turn away from with weary indifference, will be either an angel-face among your celestial companions, or else, still quivering and writhing in the agonies of the damned. This is perfectly certain. Try to feel it. With those who seem to you most uninteresting, try to feel it especially. Oh! what a solemn awfulness there is about all human beings. What a splendid destiny, or what a terrific tragedy is before them. How dare you in your narrow-minded superciliousness count any of them uninteresting! They are now on their trial for all eternity. The angels are stooping from heaven to watch the result. And you, forsooth, are too refined, too delicate in your

taste to take any interest in them. Go and ask pardon from your God for this sin. Shake off from you with loathing this cold-hearted indifference about your fellow-immortals. Rouse yourself to feel the fearfulness of any one soul spending its eternity in hell—the bliss of any one soul being in glory for ever, and in God's name let the souls that in His sight were worth the death of His Son, seem precious in your sight too.

This, then, is one useful practical rule—whenever you are tempted to feel indifference or any approach to dislike towards a fellow-creature, strive to realize vividly that that person must either bear the torments of hell-fire for ever, or share the joys of your Father's home to all eternity.

Another help towards becoming loving, is to meditate much upon our Saviour's example in this respect. When you feel cold and indifferent about your people—inclined to go through your ministrations among them merely as a routine of duty, remember how the Lord Jesus left His home of glory, and humbled Himself even to the death upon the cross, out of compassion for their souls. He came to seek and to save them—can they be uninteresting to you? Does not the love of Christ constrain you? Does not the example of His generous, self-sacrificing kindness make you ashamed of your coldness? Must you not love those whom he loves? Must you not feel it to

be a privilege to devote your earnest and affectionate care to those for whom He died? Is not the Great Shepherd going before you, lavishing among the poor feeble sheep the most exquisite tenderness? Are you not drawn irresistibly to follow in His steps, to go out and lead and help each member of that flock with self-forgetting fondness, to watch over every individual of it with affectionate sympathy and patient thoughtfulness?

St. Paul's expressions of ardent love for his people are also most valuable as stimulants to our flagging love: "My little children for whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." "I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." "We were gentle among you even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day . . . we preached unto you the gospel of God."

Every minister of Christ ought to have these and suchlike words deeply engraven on his memory. Often should he think over them, and repeat them to himself. Often should he ask of his conscience, "Is this the spirit in which I am labouring? Are these the feelings with which I regard my people? Is there

in my heart any thing like this travailing in birth for them—this agony of yearning—this readiness to spend and be spent for them, even while they do not love me—this willingness to impart to them even my own soul, through absorbing eagerness for their welfare?”

But lovingness of character has to be cultivated, not only by such inward considerations, but also (and perhaps even more effectively) by the diligent daily practice of acts of love. A ready giving up of our own wishes to others; a thoughtful consideration for their feelings; a cheerful denying of ourselves in order to do them service; a putting out of sight the subjects that are occupying our own thoughts, in order to throw ourselves thoroughly into their joys and sorrows—all this, repeated in a hundred little every-day incidents with all kinds and degrees of people, strengthens wonderfully the active habit of love, and “energizes” our emotions into a living principle of conduct.

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## CHAPTER III.

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### BOLDNESS.

BOLDNESS is another qualification very important to the pastor. He often needs to speak disagreeable words. In dealing honestly with the souls committed to his charge, he has often to shock their self-love and wound their pride. He has to reprove and rebuke, as well as to exhort. He has sometimes to withstand the great man to his face, and tell him truths he does not like to hear. With every class, poor and rich, he has to be plain and straightforward. A temptation to speak smooth things has to be constantly resisted. All this requires courage. Every day's round of visiting calls more or less for the exercise of courage—that is if the visiting be true ministerial visiting, with the determined purpose to grapple with souls. Our nature always inclines us to shrink from the real difficulty of our work. We go and speak to a man readily enough, and say the things we are expected to say, and give him a great deal of excellent advice, with the consciousness that he thinks it very nice of us to do so. But we feel a



secret repugnance to coming to close quarters with the man. We are anxious to avail ourselves of every excuse to stop short of that. We know in our conscience that we have not sent a word straight home to his heart, that we have been talking in a kind of unreal way, that what we have said has not shaken his inward soul at all, and that we scarcely meant it should. We are cowards, afraid of battering boldly at the gate—afraid of dashing to pieces the barriers that stand between his soul and conviction. We are sent with the Sword of the Spirit, which is able to pierce through joints and marrow, and we are content with a few pretty cuts in the air. We are sent to sound the trumpet notes which should waken the dead, and we soothe ourselves and our hearer with a holiday tune. And so we pass on our way. We have paid our parishioner a visit; we have spoken to him piously. What more could we do? Ah! is there no voice whispering to our conscience—"Coward! Coward! you have gone through the form of your duty, but you had not the manliness to do it really. You were afraid of laying bare the man's soul before him. You have left him there in his fatal self-satisfaction, rather than bear the pain of saying words that would startle or distress him."

Boldness, then, as well as love, is needed for our work; strong, unflinching determination, that, with God's help, neither painfulness, nor awkwardness,

nor shyness, nor anything else, shall prevent us from doing our duty honestly and faithfully. And boldness, as well as love, is not only a thing to be prayed for—not only a thing to be excited by rousing meditations—but also a thing to be increased and strengthened by practice. We can become habitually brave. There are many petty temptations to turn and flee coming upon us daily; if we watch jealously against these—if we make it a matter of principle never to allow ourselves to be silent, when we feel we ought to speak—never to shrink from a duty (however small) because it is disagreeable—never to let ourselves be satisfied with what we know are only half-measures;—then, a bold and straightforward way of doing whatever we have to do will become so habitual to us, that on great occasions, when once we see our duty, the courage to do it will come as a matter of course.

And it is in a quiet, matter-of-course way that boldness should pervade our conduct. There should be no fuss nor bluster about our courage. In the steadiness and trueness of our blows it should show itself, and not in the flourish of our sword before we strike. We should not think about being brave, but simply about doing our duty. There is sometimes a kind of spasmodic valour about the acts of a really weak man, that is most troublesome. A secret consciousness of cowardice prevents him from calmly considering how it is best for him to act, and urges

him on to do what seems the boldest thing. And this boldest thing may be quite the wrong thing, as he would have easily seen, if he had been more intent upon the good of others and the glory of his Master, and less anxious about proving his own valour. Never do a thing, then, because it requires courage. Do it unswervingly, if you see it is your duty; if not, it is no affair of yours. There may sometimes be more real courage in resisting an impulse to take an apparently bold step, than in following it.

Another very important caution on this point is, not to confuse hardness with boldness. In order to be brave, we need not cease to be loving. Sensitiveness as to other people's feelings, shrinking from causing them the slightest unnecessary pain, must not, for one moment, be thought incompatible with a Christian's holy boldness.

Let it ever be remembered that though boldness is necessary to carry out the work of love, yet from love the minister's work must proceed, and by love it must be tempered, from beginning to end, or else it will be all in vain. The two principles harmonize into one beautiful whole. Love urges the pastor to reprove the erring member of his flock; boldness enables him to go and do it without fear of his anger, or shrinking from the painfulness of the errand; but love makes the tears stand in his eyes as he speaks—love makes him choose the softest words consistent


with truthfulness, and gives its own sweet tone of tender tremulousness even to the message of rebuke.

And here a few words concerning the valuable quality of tact will come in appropriately. The highest kind of tact is really only a manifestation of love; but it manifests itself in guiding, tempering, and I might say utilizing, other qualities. A quick sympathy with the feelings of others—an almost instinctive perception of how they will be affected by our words or deeds—gives that nice judgment as to the best time and the best way of doing what ought to be done, which we call tact. Without this, boldness only hurts and irritates, earnestness wastes its energy, talent throws its riches away, wisdom becomes pompous foolishness, and every other strong quality of the heart or head drifts about uselessly, like a mighty ship without its little but all-essential helm.

Let the young minister, therefore, not look upon it as labour lost to try to improve the delicacy and accuracy of his tact. A habit of carefully considering what others are likely to feel, and watching how they are affected by what we say to them, is a valuable means to this end. If you are so engrossed in your own emotions—so eager about what you have to say, that you do not much notice how it is taken by those you speak to, you will never acquire tact. No doubt a natural quickness of perception, and that kind of imaginativeness which enables you to throw yourself

easily into the position of your hearers, do a great deal. These are gifts of nature, and cannot altogether be acquired ; but even where nature has not been bountiful in these respects, real Christian love can do much to correct the deficiency. A simple longing desire to do good to our brethren sharpens the perceptions, and brightens the imagination marvellously. Here I do believe is the great secret—an anxious, heartfelt longing, not to do our own duty merely—not to say what we ought to say—but to be of real use to others. If your principal object in the ministry is to deliver your own soul, you will care little whether your people hear, or whether they forbear ; you will only take pains to speak the truth clearly : but if your heart is set upon saving *their* souls, and if, in your affectionate anxiety about this, you cease to think much about your own soul or your own self in any way, then you will strain every nerve to get them to hear and to feel, and to be influenced by your message. Like the great Apostle, you will become all things to all men, that you may save some ; you will be content to watch for opportunities, to try every kind of means, to weigh carefully the effectiveness as well as the truth of your words ; in short, your judgment will be continually on the stretch to find out, not what is the proper thing for yourself to say, but how the hearts of others can be reached. This is what will give you tact. This is

what will make your ministry not only a bold ministry, or a faithful ministry, but a considerate and a useful ministry. If the sportsman's object be merely to discharge his piece, he will fire anywhere, and at anything; but if he wants to kill game, his step will be very wary, and his eye very watchful: often he will withhold his fire; but when the right moment comes, his shot will fly with promptitude and effect.



## CHAPTER IV.

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### STUDIOUSNESS.

CHRIST's minister is both a teacher and a leader of his people. He must, therefore, be learned and strong. His mind must be well stored with knowledge, and well exercised in thought. For this, habits of study are necessary. A good foundation of learning ought to have been laid before his ordination; it ought to be built upon diligently, by steady reading, all through his life. Many clergymen deteriorate sadly after some years of ministry, through indolence in the study. They have to talk a great deal, and from want of new subjects being brought before their minds, they think little. And so they say the same things over and over again. These things soon lose their freshness in their own minds, and, as a natural consequence, there ceases to be freshness in their way of speaking them. Thus their power of interesting others gradually fades away. There is no new fuel to get up new steam, and the engine begins to lag. They are still respected and liked, but they are felt to be dull. And so they sink lower and lower in the scale, till at last they reach that lowest intellectual depth—prosiness.

But, putting aside the fear of such degradation as this, it is manifest that he who has to lead the minds of others, and to open out to them the riches of God's Word, must be a man of study. Chiefly and specially he must be a diligent student of that Book which it is his office to teach. He must be "mighty in the Scriptures." Day and night must his meditation be in them. He must dig as one who searches for hid treasures into that mine of sacred knowledge. It is needless to dwell on the necessity of this. Every one in theory acknowledges it; but in practice, the acknowledgment is too often a barren one, for want of habits of close and thoughtful study. Most sternly, then, should the young minister bind himself, from the very outset of his course, to consecrate daily a considerable portion of his time to reading the Holy Scriptures with prayerful attention.

Each person will, of course, find out for himself what plan of reading is most profitable. No general rules can be laid down. What is a healthy discipline for one, would be a slavish bondage for another. I venture, however, to make a few suggestions on the subject, which may possibly be of use to some fellow-student in the Word.

One of the chief difficulties in the way of reading the Bible profitably is, that its words are so familiar, that there is a continual danger of their passing before our eyes without awakening any definite idea



in our minds. Every sentence that we read is almost known by heart. It comes upon us with the chime of a well-remembered tune. Other books keep up our attention by a constant under-current of expectation as to what is to follow; but we always know what will come next in the Bible. And so it is quite possible for us to read every word of several chapters with conscientious scrupulousness, and all the time not to have had a single idea impressed upon us by what we have gone through. Everything, then, which may give freshness and variety to our Scriptural study, is important. I think it is useful to carry on several different plans of reading the Bible together. At one hour of the day read it in the original, with close and laborious application, taking the greatest pains (with the help of commentaries and concordances) to make out the exact critical meaning of each sentence. At another hour read rapidly, and without stop for consideration of meanings, through long portions consecutively, so as to catch the general spirit and connection. Let this part of your reading be rather of a skimming than a studying nature. Keep in mind that your object is to get a general and collective view, and do not let details interfere with this. For example: you want to put before your mind, in one glance, a picture of our Lord's whole earthly life, from beginning to end. You take, then, one of the Gospels, and read it

through rapidly, passing from event to event without pause; you meet a conversation, you know its drift, and so you pass over it, taking up the thread of the story at its end. You come to a detailed description of a transaction; you are perfectly familiar with the account of it, so you only take such notice of it now as will make it fit as a whole into its place in the narrative, and then on with the thrilling history again. And so you push forward with eager and loving haste, planting your hurrying footsteps on each salient point, and lightly springing over details, which at another time you would love to linger on; till at last, in a very short time, you stand with the Apostles on the mount of ascension, gazing with mingled worship and affection at the noble form soaring upwards into the clouds. It is wonderful sometimes with what freshness a rapid survey like this brings the reality of our Lord's life home to the consciousness. You have read nothing that you did not know before; but the bringing close together the scattered parts, till they make one complete whole, to your mental vision, facilitates the taking in of the old truth so much, that it seems almost like a new revelation.

Then at another hour of the day, read on a completely different plan, and with a completely different object, from these two.

Take a portion of God's Word, and dwell in ear-

nest meditation on each sentence of it. Do not let a verse pass you until you have felt its teaching in your heart. Let each thought of the inspired writer become incorporated with your own spiritual existence. Take the promises, the warnings, the encouragements, the wonderful revelations, and bring them to bear on your own life, your own hopes, your own convictions. Very strengthening to the soul is this inward digestion of the Word. There is before you, for instance, a passage which speaks of the exalted position the saints hold as being "in Christ." You pause here—you shut your eyes, forget all the world, and try to realize to your mind that you are one of these exalted ones: sometimes, perhaps, you are not able to feel very much, and have to be content with believing without seeing; but sometimes, as you repeat the verse to yourself, there comes stealing over your heart the glorious conviction that, though in this world, you are not of it; that you are the peculiar and dearly valued property of your God; that your spirit and soul and body are bound up with your Saviour in heaven; that you share in His exaltation; that you are even now, in the sight of God and His angels, a celestial being.

Does not this realization of the dignity of your high calling inspire you with new strength? Does it not give a nobleness to your views of life, as you feel echoing through your heart the triumphant ex-

clamation, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His"? Is not your spirit stirred within you to devote yourself more wholly to His service, and to labour with a more single eye to His glory?

And then you read on to another verse, which suggests to you the future inheritance of the saints. Here you have to stop again, and assure yourself that the inheritance will certainly come, and that the place among the mansions is made ready for you, and the crown laid up for you. Oh! what delicious dreams entrance your soul for a moment, as, through the mists and darkness, there rise up in flickering vision the domes of the golden city, where you and your brothers and sisters are to dwell in fulness of joy for ever! But you cannot stop too long here, lest fancy, rather than faith, should be your guide.

You pass on further, and find a description of the Christian's character—of the fruits of the Spirit. Long has to be the pause here, as you strictly question yourself whether this is the standard towards which you are aiming—whether in any degree you have reached it. Am I at all like this? Could my feelings, my conduct, the general tone of my words and deeds, be described in terms such as these?

Humbled, and yet nerved to new resolutions, by this question, you take up the sacred page again. Before you have read many lines, you meet some

expression which is meant to teach the unspeakable love of Christ to His people. With earnest and prayerful effort, you try to bring this assurance home to your heart. It is not all at once that you can do it. The mind is restless and wandering, and refuses to feel as the will desires. But you keep it steadily to the point. There are the blessed statements before you, and with God's help you *will* enjoy them, and be refreshed by them. And at last your efforts are successful. How far it is the obedience of the intellectual machine to the pressure of the steadfast will, and how far it is the direct influence of the Holy Ghost, you cannot tell; but that verse, which you have been gazing on with your eyes, now speaks its message in your inmost soul. You feel what it tells you. You feel that your Saviour loves you. Yes, I am indeed beloved, is the response of your heart. Poor and feeble as I am, I am intensely dear to my Lord. He has forgiven me all my faults; He feels for me in all my weakness; He gazes on me this moment and every moment with an affection more tender—a friendship more deep, than it is possible for me to conceive.

By thus using the "sincere milk of the Word" as your spiritual food, you may be sure you will "grow" by it—grow in your own knowledge and realization of heavenly truths, and thereby grow in your power as a "steward of the mysteries of God."

In reading the Bible, and especially in this last kind of reading, we must be on our guard against a tendency to think of what we read rather as grounds for our exhortations to others, than as nourishment for ourselves. There is a danger of being constantly on the look out for good "texts." We have to preach and speak so much, and what we are going to say is naturally so interesting to ourselves, that we are more apt to think, when we read some important verse, "How nicely this will illustrate such and such a point in my sermon;" or, "How exactly this applies to poor Mrs. B.," than simply, "What does my God teach me by this passage?" This habit, if not watched against, is ruinous. If you look upon the Bible in this external way, it will be no food for yourself: your own soul will starve; and a miserable teacher you will then make. Depend upon it, too, the texts you have felt yourself, and which have become wound up with your own spiritual experience, will come to your mind when you are preparing your sermons and speaking to your people, in a far more effective manner than those which you have taken notice of only as likely to do *them* good.

And yet it is necessary to study the Scriptures with reference to your teaching, as well as to your own profit. I have heard it recommended to keep the two things completely separate—to have your hour of special study for your people, and your

hour of special study for yourself. Within certain limits, this is a valuable rule, as I shall show just now; but if it were carried out in full strictness, it would be, I think, too artificial to be thoroughly healthy.

If you are carefully on your guard against the danger just alluded to, you may often with profit, in your own devotional reading, note down a passage which you have found very useful to yourself, as likely to be of use to others also. The powers of the mind are elastic enough to admit sometimes of a double influence—to consider a Divine truth, both in its bearing on your inward state and on your outward work. Only be very jealous of any interference between the voice of God and your own soul, and then you need not be afraid to let thoughts of your beloved flock often mingle with your deepest meditations on heavenly subjects.

But it is important to make our teaching-work a special object of Scriptural study; and doing so in a real way is a further help towards *freshness* in Bible reading. By a real way, I mean, not looking out for texts on a certain subject in concordances or Scripture abstracts, but reading the Word to find out yourself what it says on that subject. A very poor and distorted view of truth is given by a heterogeneous assembly of isolated verses. Bearing in mind the subject you want to be enlightened on, take your

Bible yourself, and search it. Glance on rapidly over chapter after chapter, book after book. Whenever there is anything touching on the subject, your eye will be caught by it; note it down either with your memory or your pencil, and press on again in your search.

When you have gone through a large portion of the Bible, (say the whole of the New Testament, and it is wonderful how quickly you will run over it when eagerly searching) turn back, and lay side by side the materials you have gathered. Read carefully over all the places you have taken note of, keeping in mind the circumstances under which, and the object for which, the passage was written, and modifying your judgment accordingly. If you want to know what is really the "mind of God" on the point, it is thus you will be most likely to find it out. Your sermon or private explanation will be fresh and interesting to your hearers, and, what is of more consequence, will be faithful in the sight of God.

In forming your opinion on any controverted doctrine, this mode of reading is an invaluable help. I do not mean that you are to overlook the results of the investigations made by men who have brought to the search more learning and wisdom than you could bring, or that the interpretations of the early Church are to have no effect in influencing your thoughts.

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Both modesty and common sense should urge you to use these as auxiliaries; but still let your views be mainly formed from what you find in the Word itself. I speak now of those minor points of controversy, on which there can be various shades of opinion in our own communion. I take it for granted, that in all fundamental doctrines you have not now to be an inquirer, but that you were fully satisfied about them before you assumed the office of teacher in the Church. But many questions of a very serious nature may be suggested to you in books or conversation, on which your views are not yet either clear or settled. The more candid and intensely truth-loving you are, the more of these, (in your youth, at least,) will lie open before you. If you do not want your opinions to be mere weak echoes of other men's, consult the Bible for its verdict in the way that has just been suggested. Until this is done, care little for the convincing "proofs" you will read in treatises on one side or other. Prejudiced ingenuity can warp the Bible into anything. Try not to take up a side too quickly. Resist the temptation to look at some texts with a secret feeling of vexation, as if they were troublesome obstacles to be got over. If your only desire is to find out what God tells you, you will be equally satisfied whatever side is favoured. If you are more anxious to see exactly what your Heavenly Father has revealed, than to prove that you

have been right in something you have said, or that your "party" is borne out in what it holds, you will trace out the subject with patient equanimity. In this spirit read your Bible with reference to that one subject; and when you have put together everything that seems to throw light upon it, ask yourself honestly two questions: first, whether there is sufficiently clear evidence to come to *any* fixed decision; and, secondly, if there be, what that decision is. If you cannot answer the first question, do not be ashamed to confess that you have no decided opinion on the point. Do not be ambitious to have "clear views:" let your only object be to have true views. If an artist paints a landscape without any haze or mist, or aerial perspective—if all alike, foreground, back-ground, and middle-ground, is distinct and definite—his picture may be very clear, but it is very bad; it is not like nature. And if a Bible student has his mind made up on every point of theology—if to every deep question he can give an unhesitating yes or no—his views may be very clear, but they are sure to be false. Depend upon it, he is an unsafe guide. Either he has not power of mind enough to see the difficulties that beset most subjects—to see the conflicting hints, the important arguments both on the positive and the negative side—or else he has not honesty enough to acknowledge what he sees. Prejudice and rashness have

blinded his eyes, or the fear of man has silenced his tongue.

Let not, then, your desire to have a clear view interfere with the conscientious justice with which you should draw your conclusion from your survey of Bible evidence. Let it be your aim to be certain wherever the Bible is distinct—uncertain wherever the Bible is indistinct.

I would conclude these fragmentary hints on Scripture study by this simple one: never shut the Book without carrying away something definite. Make it a rule, when you have done your reading, always to ask yourself, "What have I been reading about?—what ideas have I to remember and think of?" Sum up, at the end of your studying, the thoughts that impressed you most. This will help to form the habit of attention, while it will startle you sometimes, by showing you how little attention you have been giving to what your eyes have been looking at.

Finally: after your study take heed lest you be like the man beholding his natural face in the glass, and straightway forgetting what manner of man he is. Take heed lest the fowls of the air carry away the grains of precious seed that have been falling on your heart.

But though the Bible is the Pastor's chief study, he ought to work hard at many other books also.

Sound, solid learning ought to be continually laid in, both to strengthen the mind and to enlarge its store of information. Surrounded as we are now on all sides with active and highly cultivated intellects, it will not do for the teacher of souls to be illiterate. Knowledge is power; and he that would take up his proper position, as ambassador of the Most High, needs power—power to help those who are struggling in the agonies of doubt—power to reason wisely with those who are being led astray into the devious paths of error—power to silence with sound argument the self-conceited and arrogant gainsayer—power to guide, and assist, and draw onwards in his course, the earnest lover of truth.

Let not the young minister, then, imagine that he has nothing to do but to know his Bible well, in order to be armed at all points, and thoroughly furnished for his work. The authority of that Bible is often doubted—the interpretation of his favourite passages often disputed—the original languages sifted and tortured, so as to bring out difficulties of which he had no idea, and so as to cut the ground from under time-honoured notions which he fancied were unassailable axioms of truth. A pitiful figure does an unlearned clergyman make when thrown into contact with highly educated but unsettled minds. He feels himself on unknown ground, and is frightened and perplexed. Arguments he never heard of, objec-

tions he had no conception of, are brought against that truth which he is bound to defend. Perhaps he tries to cover his confusion with angry and positive dogmatism. Perhaps he brings forward, by way of argument, exploded old sophisms; and the lovers of God's truth are disheartened to see him whom they looked to as its champion so put to shame; and the sceptics are confirmed in their unbelief, and fancy that this miserable bungling is all that can be said on the side of religion.

But even without supposing such opposition; if the pastor has not that largeness of mind and liberality of view which can only be produced by extensive reading, he will never have the influence over educated men which one holding his office ought to have. If he has been left behind by the great current of human thought, and lives altogether in the little world of his own ideas, and those of his peculiar clique or party, his usefulness is greatly narrowed; his sphere of sympathy is limited, and his sphere of influence is limited along with it. Where he has no sympathy, he will be able to exercise no power; and it is a pity to see an earnest man thus losing his hold over the strongest minds among his people, and bringing a tinge of contempt on their feelings towards him.

It is useless to repeat, in objection to all this, the vulgar platitudes about God's having no need of

man's knowledge, and about the wonders He effected by the preaching of unlearned fishermen. Of course, the Omnipotent can accomplish any ends by any means He chooses; but this is no business of ours. It is not His power, but our own duty, we are concerned in. It is our duty to make ourselves as efficient means as we possibly can for the great purposes He has entrusted us with. All ignorance that arises from our indolence is a hindrance to our usefulness, for which we are guiltily responsible. And we know well, as a matter of fact, that people are less likely to receive with meekness the engrafted Word from one whom they look down on as half-educated and narrow-minded, than from one whom they feel to be strong in intellectual acquirements, as well as in purity of aim and devotedness of life.

I do not intend to suggest here any definite course of reading. Your reading should vary according to the circumstances you are placed in, and in some degree also according to your natural tastes. You will follow best that line of thought with which your bent of mind has most sympathy. Very excellent courses of general theological reading are laid down by our Universities and by our Bishops. The great standard works they recommend on Scripture Criticism, on the Evidences, on Ecclesiastical History, and the principal controversies, form a valuable foundation for future study. Most of them ought to be

re-read occasionally. Some of them are the best books written on the subjects they treat of, and are treasures in themselves. Others are useful in opening and showing the way to veins of knowledge to be worked out by further reading. The kind of books which should be your chief favourites are those which throw additional light on the Holy Scriptures. Very precious stores of this best kind of theology have been accumulated for us of late, both by our own students, and by our brethren in Germany. The names of Alford, Ellicot, Trench, Stier, &c., may serve to suggest the style of literature I allude to. Much of the doctrinal theology through which we sometimes feel it right to wade, leaves behind it only an impression of vanity and vexation of spirit. But no matter how much time we spend on books which open out the beauties of God's Word, and help us to understand its real meaning, and to disentangle it from man's superadded rubbish, we feel that our labour is not lost, as we have gained something substantial.

It is not as pleasant to the spirit, but is very important, also, that the minister should be thoroughly well informed on the controversies of the day. The great questions that are agitating the minds of thousand of the thinkers around him, he ought seriously to enter into, and, if possible, make himself master of. Just now, that peculiar phase of scepticism,

which is so widely spread amongst us, and fascinates so many by the earnestness and beauty of the language in which it is couched, ought to occupy much of his attention. On the points assailed, or rather undermined by it, he ought especially to strengthen himself. The reality of the atonement—the inspiration of the Scriptures—the objective certainty of the facts of our religion—the very personality of God—he ought to understand how these truths are treated; he ought to be able to tear off the disguise, under which the attacks against the m are masked, and wisely and convincingly to vindicate the faith once delivered to the saints.

Some good men are apt to “pooh, pooh,” all these “new-fangled notions,” and to speak as if one or two good texts would put them to flight. They imagine, at all events, that the fine old books that annihilated Hume and his eighteenth-century-comrades, must sweep them all off the field without further trouble on our part. This is a very comfortable state of mind, doubtless; but, unfortunately, it will not prevent the mischief going on; it will not prevent precious souls from being lost. There is no use in our shutting our eyes to a danger that is very real. Nor is there much use in our aiming blows at an “extinct Lucifer” while a living one is at our gate. The controversy has shifted its ground since the days of our fathers. We must follow it thither—understand its position, and



gain the old victory, even though it be on a new field, and with new weapons.

Before concluding this chapter on studiousness, I must make a few remarks on a kind of reading, which cannot be called study; but which has nevertheless its place in the improvement of the mind—I mean “light literature.” Do not despise light literature. Do not imagine that there is any wisdom in calling it “trash,” and refusing to waste your time over it. This style of speaking is either a silly affectation, or else a sign of narrowness of mind and heaviness of intellect. All really great men are able to appreciate and feel with the lighter moods of thought, as well as those which are deep and serious. The more readily responsive your heart is to every touch of human feeling, whether the light and sportive, or the solemn and intense, the more strong and useful will you be.

But in much of what is called light literature, there is really noble and beautiful thought, which, though it is not directly religious, may be a valuable assistance to your soul's progress. Of poetry this is especially true. Who, after he has been elevated and gladdened, nerved to higher resolutions, and sent on his way rejoicing, by some glorious poem, can doubt that that power was given to the poet by the Giver of every good and perfect gift, to help poor struggling

spirits in their upward aspirations? Shame on the bigoted pharisee who could call the reading of such a work waste of time! Of the higher class of essays also the same can be said. They are the productions of gifted minds. Beneath their pleasant and popular style, there is generally running an under-current of earnest thought. Many grave and momentous subjects are discussed in them, and you will often rise from their perusal a more thoughtful, and perhaps a wiser man.

In glancing over the ordinary literature of the day, histories, biographies, travels, magazines, fictions even, when they are well written, you will have an innocent hour of recreation after many a hard and trying day's work—recreation, which it would be stupid Puritanism, or morbid scrupulousness, to object to. At the same time you will gain interesting information on many points; a more genial tone will be given to your mind; the peculiar "idola" arising from your professional pursuits will be in a measure driven away; and, what is of considerable importance, you will have more of common ground on which to meet your neighbours in social intercourse—common ground, from whence you may lead them on to a higher sympathy, a heavenly fellowship. Do not think that this last remark is irreverent. It is simply true. You make some new acquaintance; if you immediately address him on the subject of "his

soul," you probably fail; you make him feel a shyness and restraint towards you: but if first you become to a certain extent "*en rapport*" with him, through the medium of mutual tastes and mutual interests, intimacy is formed, friendship is begun; you have access to his heart; and then, if your great object in cultivating his acquaintance is to bring him to God, who can tell what blessed results will follow.

I hope after what I have said on "Studiousness" above, it is now unnecessary for me to give the caution never to let an hour be given to light literature, which conscience tells you ought to be given to prayer, to study, or to the parish. Light reading is an innocent and useful recreation in seasons of leisure; in times that ought to be spent in work, it is a sinful robbery of what belongs to God.

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## CHAPTER V.

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### LABORIOUSNESS.

THE useful minister must be a laborious man. Hard work must be a leading characteristic of his life. Nothing great can be done in this world without labour; in the difficult and momentous business of the ministry this is especially the case. But although there is no profession in which labour is so needful as in the ministry, there is none in which there is so little outward necessity for labour. In other callings you must work or starve: your business is visible, tangible, measured out for you; if you neglect it, you fall into disgrace, and lose your pay. But in the ministry, labour is altogether voluntary. You may work as much or as little as you please. Your pay is in no way influenced either by your diligence or your idleness. And, indeed, it could scarcely be otherwise. Many men clamour loudly for a better proportioning of work and pay by legislation; some improvement in this respect might doubtless be made, but to expect it to any accurate degree is utopian. Soul-work cannot be measured out and paid for by

the quantity. There is a time coming when every man shall receive "his own reward according to his own labour;" but that time is not during this earthly dispensation. In several respects it is better as it is. One out of many temptations to work for display is removed, and it is less hard for our labour to be purely a labour of love.

Be this as it may, however, the amount of labouriousness which each minister brings to his duty, is now altogether a matter for the individual conscience. And this makes it requisite for him to be the more scrupulously watchful on the point. It is dangerously easy, as matters stand, to glide gradually into self-indulgent, slothful ways—to offer unto our God a sacrifice that costs us nothing. You may keep up an appearance of activity, and be often seen among your people, and be thought very hard-working by them, while you are in fact shrinking from the real trouble of your work. A good-humoured, pleasantly-mannered man, can, without effort, without self-denial, without anything that can be called labour, do enough of *apparent* work to be considered a model of diligence. A great deal of ordinary visiting, and ordinary talking is no trouble at all to us. We must spend our days at something; and many of us, if we are not going our parish rounds, have nothing else to do. Taking a nice walk or ride daily, and stepping into several houses, where we

receive a cordial welcome, making inquiries about church-going and school attendance, and then speaking a few pious words, which from habit come to us quite naturally—it is surely absurd to call this labour. And yet the clergyman who does so is certain to be counted hard-working. His people are satisfied with him. They never dream of accusing him of idleness; so that unless the warning comes from his conscience, it will not come at all.

Often, then, should there be a close, searching examination in the pastor's conscience: Am I *labouring* in my work? Am I giving myself trouble, and exerting my energies? How have I laboured to-day? What self-indulgent impulses have I shaken off? What efforts have I made, at the cost of my own ease, to spend and be spent for my flock?

And in spite of the easiness of an outward round of duty, whoever is honest with himself, will be obliged to feel that all work to which he has not given labour is very poor work, and inefficient work.

The visit where the energies have not been roused to grapple with the souls of the family, has been a profitless visit. The school teaching which has been done lazily and perfunctorily, has been as uninteresting to the children, as irksome to one's-self. The sermon which has not been prepared and delivered with the mind at full strain, has been dull and cold.

There is a law in physics, to which much attention

has been turned of late, that every change in bodies, however various, heat, light, motion, &c., is only an outward expression of the exertion of "force." This law seems to hold good in the spiritual world also. As a general rule, we can produce no actual effect, except in proportion as we exert *force*—force in prayer for guidance—force in thinking beforehand what work it is best for us to do ; and then force—earnestness, active exertion—in doing it.

The minister, then, must be laborious in the *quality* of his work. Each ministerial act should call forth the full power of his soul. The temptation to satisfy the conscience with merely going through the duty must be continually shaken off. It must be done earnestly, strenuously, vigorously, or else it is only self-delusion to imagine that it is done at all.

But in the *quantity* of his work, also, as well as the quality, the pastor must be laborious. "Give thyself wholly to these things" is the divine injunction : "Never cease your labour, your care and diligence" are the solemn words which rang in his ears, as he was sent forth by the Church as the ordained minister of God. Giving himself wholly to his work—labouring unceasingly—is the degree of laboriousness towards which, as far as his bodily powers allow him, he is to be ever aiming. His life has been consecrated to the ministry by solemn vows. His Master's eye is upon him every moment, seeing

how he tends the flock He has entrusted to him. Satan and the world are busy incessantly with their toils. The great day of the Lord is steadily approaching. Soon the minister will have to stand face to face with his people, and give an account of how he has watched for their souls.

There is no time, therefore, to be wasted. If it would be terrible to him to see souls lost for ever through his carelessness ; if he would shrink with agony from the reproaches of the condemned, for not having warned them—pleaded with them—compelled them to come in ; if it would be bliss unspeakable to him to see at the right hand of the Throne, those whom he has been the means of leading into the fold, he must labour unceasingly, he must be “instant in season, and out of season.” “Daily, in the temple, and from house to house,” he must not cease to teach and to preach the Lord Jesus. He must, like his Master, “work while it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work.”

The particular manner in which each person's labour is to be employed, must be left to his own prayerful judgment ; but as to the quantity of labour to be given there is no choice. The whole of the pastor's life is to be devoted to his work. Some time, indeed, is necessary for relaxation, and for the claims of family duties ; and if we are honest in the decided purpose of our hearts, to give ourselves



wholly to our ministry, the loving Lord, whose we are, and whom we serve, will not grudge us these intervals of refreshment; and will, if it be good for us, make them very sweet and happy. But, except for these intervals, every day, and the whole day long, ought to be spent in doing our work. In doors, and out of doors—in the closet, the study, the church, the school, the lecture-room—in the street, the lane, the farm-house, the hovel, must the work be done, and little time enough will the whole day be found for doing it in.

The proportion in which labour ought to be divided between the study and the parish, must, of course, depend much upon circumstances; but under all circumstances, conscientious care must be taken that neither be neglected for the sake of the other. We must never teach so much as to have no time for reading, nor read so much as to have no time for teaching. If a man is so busy studying, that he cannot go out to visit among his people, he is like a soldier, who is so hard at work sharpening his sword, that he cannot fight. If his time is so much occupied out of doors, that he has no leisure for study, he is like the soldier, who, in his eagerness to fight, leaves his sword behind him.

The natural disposition of each minister will probably incline him to take more pleasure in one branch of his work than the other: reading will be

more congenial to one, parochial activity to another. Whichever we are most disinclined to, is the very one we must be most careful not to neglect. If you love your books—if it is a pleasure and a joy to you to plunge deep into them, and linger long over them, then take heed lest they become a snare to you : exercise great restraint over the indulgence of your taste. Tear yourself away sternly from your beloved volumes when the appointed hour strikes, and sally forth to that dealing with souls, for which book learning is only a preparation. If, on the other hand, study is a weariness to you ; if you would rather be stirring from place to place, walking, talking, and teaching, than sitting quietly over your Greek Testament, then you are just the person for whom diligent study is most needful. You are in danger of becoming superficial and wordy ; you are in danger of dwelling exclusively on hackneyed texts, and pet doctrines, instead of “rightly dividing the word of truth”—instead of coming to the depths and reality of things. You must discipline yourself to stick more to your study, and to labour more for your God in mind-work.

I must not leave the subject of laboriousness without suggesting (although it is a very obvious truth) that ministerial labour, like all other labour, in order to be effective, must be steady and methodical, as well as earnest.

Many clergymen work by fits and starts. They are eager and impetuous in visiting, &c., for a few days or weeks, then they subside again into indolence, till heavy arrears of duty rouse them to a new dash. This is labouring (if, indeed, it can be called labour at all) on impulse, not on principle. It is faulty in its motive, and generally unproductive in its result. We ought to work, not only when we feel inclined to work, which is occasionally, but when it is our duty to work, which is every day. We have no choice in the matter. Whether our feelings are in the mood or not—in season and out of season, woe be unto us if we preach not the Gospel. Every day of our lives, as a rule, we ought to busy ourselves with our parochial duties. This is what will surely tell in the long run. “*Nulla dies sine linea*” should be our motto. On some days we shall be able to do less, on other days more; on some days one kind of work, at other times a different work, but each day something. Let this become the regular habit of our lives, never to be broken through without strong reason.

We must learn to be systematic also. Our parochial machinery must be worked with punctuality and order. The tendency to overdo the kind of duty we like, and to neglect that which we dislike—to pay much attention to our favourite people, and little or none to those who do not interest us—must be

sternly resisted. Each part of our work must be taken in its course; each person must be looked after in his turn. The school should have its hour, the lecture or the class its regularly recurring time, the sermon-preparation its special day, the study its appointed hours, the round of visiting its regular order; all of which should be as closely kept to as circumstances will admit of.

It is a useful, indeed an almost indispensable help to systematic labour, to have a diary, in which every day's work is noted down, with such brief memoranda as the memory may require to guide us in taking up each part of the work in its next turn. Parochial registers, with the names of our parishioners, and columns in which to enter our visits to them, are now too universal to require mention. Their importance is obvious.

We must not let system, however, degenerate into bondage. There are times when charity and wisdom require us to break through our regular routine. If we are honest in our purpose, we need not be afraid of recognizing this necessity when it exists. The only use of order is to help us to do our work: if by its tyrannous appeal to our systematic habits it impedes us in work, it becomes a troublesome master, instead of a useful servant. System is nothing in itself: it is only a means to an end; when the end can be better attained without it, let it be set aside. We must work as men, not as machines.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### PRAYERFULNESS AND PATIENCE.

BUT after all, work as we will, our work is in itself very powerless. Words are but weak instruments for moving the depths of the human soul. The longer and the more earnestly a pastor labours the more he will feel this.

When the young man first goes out to exercise his ministry, with strong convictions and ardent enthusiasm, he fancies that every thing must yield before him. He will plead with his people, he thinks, so vehemently; he will make such passionate appeals to them; he will pour out upon them such a torrent of fiery words, that though their hearts were of stone, they must give way. But soon he finds that he is not so strong as he thought. His words are listened to, admired, perhaps, and even deeply felt by many. Nevertheless, the great change in the face of society that he expected does not follow. Here and there there are inquirers, and here and there it is to be hoped real converts, but the great mass of his people seem little changed.

Worldliness, and money-seeking, and quarrelsomeness, and pride go on apparently as much as ever. Many, who seemed at one time seriously impressed, disappoint him bitterly. Some whom he thought he could surely reclaim are utterly unmoved. If he is a genuine worker, and is not satisfied with external results—with pious expressions, or professions of conversion; if he is looking for a real change of character and life, the conviction is soon forced upon him that his words have not such a wonderful power as he imagined. He has to cope with passions, prejudices, earthly instincts, fierce desires, apathy, and deadness of heart; what are words in the face of all these?

He can speak to each person only for a short time, every now and then, and during all the other days and hours of that person's life, contrary influences are busy with him.

Many there are also in his parish, who, from want of education, and continual engrossment of mind in grovelling cares, seem almost incapable of being affected in any way by religious words. They connect no definite ideas with them. Their minister, when he speaks in the simplest language, soon feels that he is addressing them in an unknown tongue: the most earnest appeal, the most solemn warning, meets with no response, except the unmeaning assent, which conveys only the desire to satisfy, and if possible get rid of "the parson."

As surely, then, as the minister has striven with the souls of such as these among his people—has talked with the labourer digging in his field—has sat with the old woman over the hearth—has stood by the sick bed, where habitual dulness and apathy were mingling with the languid stupor of disease—has tried to get the heavy, loutish, youth to leave his plough for a moment's conversation about his eternal interests—has preached with all his heart, Sunday after Sunday, to listeners whose stolid faces showed that they were unmoved, and apparently unmoveable, by all he could say—so surely he has learned that his words are very weak.

Truly the longer a minister labours, and the more closely he “watches” over the souls entrusted to him, the more he feels that he needs for his work some stronger instrument than speaking.

But another instrument has been placed in his hands by his Father—namely, prayer. Words are weak, but prayer is strong. Words cannot bar the fierce rush of passions, nor stop the steady current of long-formed habits; but prayer can raise up against them a power even mightier than theirs—the power of God. Words can only be brought to bear on the hearer once or twice in the week; but prayer can follow him through every day and every hour of his life. Words can scarcely waken an echo in the stupid and ignorant heart; but prayer can

cause a voice to be heard there, sweeter than all earthly voices, grander than all human eloquence, making those poor blunted feelings thrill with the new-born cry of "Abba, Father."

Prayer is indeed an instrument of incalculable power, entrusted by God to His minister: very heavy is his responsibility, if he does not use it.

Whatever other qualifications a minister may have, if he is not a man of prayer, he will never succeed. There will be blight and barrenness over all he does, for God will not own his work. I have no doubt it is to this cause much of ministerial failure may be traced. Labour has been freely expended in planning, and organizing, and speaking, but there has been little labour in prayer. God's blessing on each undertaking has been hastily invoked, as a matter of course; but time has not been spent in opening out the whole matter before Him; the soul has not wrestled with Him in supplications for help, before its commencement; the dews of His grace have not been besought for it again and again, during its continuance; and, as a sure consequence, the work has languished and failed. Often should the minister examine himself on this point. "Do I labour in prayer? Do I strive with God for my people? Do I supplicate Him, with agonized intenseness, to have mercy upon them, and pour out His Spirit upon them, and save them, and help them, and strengthen



them?" Especially should he press these questions home to his conscience, when he finds that his work—or some particular part of his work—is not prospering as it ought. "This effort is not succeeding: have I made it the subject of heartfelt supplications to my God? This work is flagging: are my prayers in its behalf flagging also? This person is disappointing me by his inconsistency and backsliding: have I brought his name sufficiently before the throne of grace?" If such questions were to follow every failure, failure itself might be made a source of strength, and lead the way to success.

It is difficult to write anything on this subject, that is not almost trite. Every one, who has ever spoken or written for the purpose of helping ministers of the Gospel, has felt the necessity of pressing upon them the paramount importance of prayer. To the many stirring exhortations to perseverance in this duty given in other books, I shall only add two or three suggestions.

1. Convince yourself thoroughly of the efficacy of intercessory prayer. I think that much of our indolence in prayer arises from a secret unbelief in the fact that our prayers do real good to the persons we pray for. Investigate the subject, then, carefully in the Scriptures. Put together all the passages which speak of intercessory prayer, and all the instances recorded of intercessory prayers an-

swered, and draw the conclusion which necessarily follows from this Scriptural evidence. Then, if you believe that the Bible is indeed the Word of God, settle it in your mind that it is a fact, as certain as any other revealed fact, that, in the mysterious dealings of the Most High, He has arranged that the prayer of one man should have a powerful influence on the destiny of another man. Do not embarrass yourself with the theoretical difficulties that beset the subject: simply grasp the revealed truth: grasp it firmly, and impress it vividly upon your consciousness. Take trouble to make yourself feel, as a reality, that the "effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Do not be afraid to repeat to yourself decidedly—"My prayer avails much. Unworthy and weak as I am, I am in God's sight 'a righteous man'—counted righteous for the merits of Jesus Christ: I am 'accepted in the beloved,' looked upon by God as one of His holy saints: He will honour my prayer; He will neither let it go unnoticed or unanswered." Once believe thoroughly that your prayers for others are an actual, positive benefit to them, and you will need few more arguments to make them pour forth freely.

2. Remind yourself often that intercessory prayer is part of the special business of the ministerial office. Remember how the "priests, the ministers of the Lord," are commanded to "weep between

the porch and the altar, and to cry out, Spare thy people, O Lord," &c. Call to mind how the Apostles appointed men to serve the tables, in order that they might "give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." Read over the beautiful intercessory prayers of the Model Pastor, Jesus Christ, and of his noble Apostle, Paul. By these means impress it deeply upon your conscience, that labouring for your people in prayer is an important part of your appointed work as God's minister; and that, just as you would have to reproach yourself for guilty dereliction of duty if you were indolent in preaching, visiting, or teaching, so also will you have to condemn yourself for neglect of your business, if you are indolent in prayer. "Prayer and the ministry of the Word"—keep these two before you as inseparable and equally necessary branches of your labours.

3. Make it a rule, if possible, to bring *each member* of your flock by name before the throne of grace, in due course. In crowded city parishes, this would be impracticable; but in all cases, where the number of souls is not too great to come individually under the pastor's observation, it can be done without difficulty. A very simple and profitable plan for doing so is this: look back every evening on your day's work; think of what persons you have spoken to; think of their characters, their circumstances,

their spiritual conditions; and then, one by one, mention them in prayer to God, and beseech Him to send His blessing upon them, according to their needs. Thus your praying work will keep pace with your speaking work. Each person that you have laboured for at all, you will have laboured for in both the appointed ways; and as family after family has been visited, sick man after sick man ministered to, child after child taught and questioned, they will all have been brought by you before the throne of grace in special intercession; and by the time every individual of your flock has been spoken to, every one will also have been prayed for.

One more qualification I feel it necessary to mention after prayerfulness: it is *patience*. "The servant of God must be gentle towards all men, apt to teach, patient." And truly he has much need of patience. His work is slow work—often discouraging work—sometimes irritating work. Souls for whose salvation he yearns, seeming for long years unchanged—efforts in which every energy of his heart has been employed, seemingly wasted—earnest advice seeming utterly unheeded: all this is very trying, but it must be gone through. It is not God's purpose that every one should belong to the little flock: and as it is His will that every one should be invited into it, those who are sent round

with the invitation must often come home with saddened hearts.

The soul of man, moreover, is a very strangely constituted and delicate thing. It would not bear always the strong, rough handling with which we would treat it; and God's dealings with it are very different from what ours would be. We would wish for rapid, sudden, immediately visible changes—slow and secret growth is often His plan. Sometimes He shows us His supremacy by instantaneous and almost miraculous conversions, but perhaps most generally He carries on His work by the operation of gradual influences. The maturing of convictions, the strengthening of resolutions, the formation of habits—such are the quiet and unobtrusive means by which God the Holy Ghost draws the human soul upwards; and many a time the loving pastor, who sees nothing of the working of these steady laws, and the developing of these hidden principles, weeps because the babe in Christ is not a grown man all at once.

The minister's pride, too, has often as much to say to his impatience as has his love. Failure in any shape is a bitter pill for vanity to swallow. You fancy you are grieved with a godly sorrow because your people are not better: is there not mingling with your feelings something of anger, because you yourself are not more attended to? Your congregations are smaller than they should be; you make a

pious moan over the people's lukewarmness: is there in the bottom of your heart no secret chafing, because your own preaching is not better appreciated? The boundary between an affectionate longing for your Master's glory, and an over-eager anxiety for the success of your own efforts, is not always very clearly defined. Hence there is a danger of selfish discontent creeping in upon you, under the mask of disappointed zeal. And this may produce, ere long, a peevishness of manner and an irritation of mind, which will be ruinous to your usefulness. You can hardly go on "steadfastly, unmoveably, always abounding in the work of the Lord," while you feel sore and vexed at heart. It will seem to you as if your labour was "in vain in the Lord." "What is the use of my troubling myself," you will murmur, "when my people will not attend to me—when all my efforts are thrown away, and my care wasted upon them?"

For all these reasons, patience is very much required in a minister of the Gospel. He must learn not only to labour, but also to "wait." He must know how to work on and pray on, steadily and hopefully, whether success is granted, or whether it is withheld. It is of the utmost importance—as was hinted a little while ago—that our labour should be carried on *on principle*, independently of emotion; that in joy and in sadness, in hope and in doubt, our

work should continue the same—the same in its love—the same in its diligence—the same in its watchful carefulness. This is what will give it strength; this is what will make our ministry a firm, steadfast power, pressing on the consciences of our people, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear; busy with them alike when yielded to, and when rejected; ready to produce its effect on their souls in God's own time and God's own way.

But patience under failure must not be confounded with indifference about success. It is one thing to keep up heart and hope, even when we see no results from our work; it is quite another thing to be careless as to whether we see results or not. It is easy to be satisfied without success, if our hearts are not set with earnest longing upon the salvation of souls. If we just want to do our own duty and relieve our own conscience, it is little concern to us what becomes of others, so long as we are safe ourselves. Very quietly can we, then, go on plodding through our accustomed tasks, enjoying the comforts of an easy life, while souls are going to destruction around us. God forbid that we should fall into this guilty, this fatal apathy, and call it patience. Patience implies bearing—suffering. The hireling shepherd, who “careth not for the sheep,” has little to bear or to suffer while the wolf commits his ravages. A time is coming when he will suffer; but this suffering will

proceed from the account he must give of what was committed to his charge, and not from love of the poor sheep, and sorrow for their loss.

The pastor ought to long intensely for the success of his ministry: and very eagerly ought he to look for results from his divinely commissioned labour. "Soul-greedy" is a rude old phrase, but it expresses well the faithful minister's feelings. Souls are what he is ever craving for;—souls to be brought into peace and holiness here—souls to be delivered from misery hereafter—souls to be his crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord. This is what he is striving and praying for; this is what he expects to see; he is torn in heart when he sees but little of it.

As his Master wept over Jerusalem, as Paul could not speak without weeping of those who were enemies of the Cross of Christ, as Jeremiah wished that his "head were waters, and his eyes fountains of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people;" so he, too, grieves really and deeply when he sees the souls of his people continuing in danger.

The minister who knows nothing of this sorrow, knows nothing of patience either. For it is in bearing such sorrow that true patience is exercised. It is in being jealous over our people with a godly jealousy, when they go astray, and still being gentle with them, and still persevering in loving persuasions, and still



believing that God can bless our feeble instrumentality, even at the eleventh hour, if so He pleases—it is in this that the kind of patience which “hopeth all things and endureth all things,” manifests itself.

And here we are brought to what lies at the foundation of true patience—namely, humility and faith. Feel deeply your own insufficiency; recognise continually how weak you are, how inconsistent, how deficient both in self-devotion and in wisdom. At the same time, trust implicitly in your God: lean firmly on the truth that He is with you, that He sees your efforts, and controls their results. Let a lowly estimate of your own efforts, and a strong confidence in God’s love, power, and wisdom, be thus mingled together; and then you will be able to be patient: though grieved that you cannot do more, you will not give up doing what you can: though cast down at the smallness of your success, there will be no peevish murmurs in your breast: though mourning often for your people’s sins, you will not feel as if you were personally aggrieved; you will know that you have done nothing that deserves success. Whatever little does come, you will look upon as God’s work, not yours, and thank Him for crowning your poor efforts even with this much blessing.

In conclusion, God Himself is provoked every day, and yet is patient as well as strong. “What more

could I have done for my vineyard," He exclaims, "that I have not done?" and yet it brought forth wild grapes. Even could you say, "What more could I have done for my people that I have not done?" if your work proved unprosperous, you would only be like your Lord in His rejection; dare you be unlike Him in His patience?





## PART II.—THE PARISH.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### PREACHING.

“THE PARISH”—what a good old English sound there is about the word! How many pleasant associations are connected with it! How does its name call up at once to our minds loving intercourse between pastor and people—solemn worship, week after week, in quiet churches—bright faces of little children crowding into village schools—earnest prayers beside sick men’s beds—attentive groups gathered round the honoured minister by cottage fires—troubled consciences seeking for advice and comfort from the pastor, whom they look to as their kindest earthly friend! Steady, permanent, useful work of all kinds, seems to belong by right to the term “parish.” We feel it to be entwined with thoughts of practical, quiet holiness. Noisy excitement and showy professions are alien to its spirit. The parish is a time-honoured institution, and gathers into its system only that which is lasting and real.

In the first part of this essay we considered the general qualifications of the pastor; we must now introduce him into the sphere of his labours—accompany him into the parish where his energies are to be employed, and try to help him in the details of its regular working. And as he enters into the vineyard which he is appointed to keep, our prayers and the prayers of many of his brethren go with him—that his God may strengthen and guide him in his work, may hold him up when he is weary, may urge him on when he is flagging in his zeal, may comfort him when he is cast down, may give abundant increase to his planting and watering, and grant him many happy souls to be his joy and crown in the final gathering together of the Lord's saints.

The minister's first anxiety will probably be his opening sermon. And so it ought; for the first words his people hear him speak are of great importance. In that opening address he strikes, as it were, the key-note of the grand harmony of his after-work. And the note should be audibly given. While all eyes are fixed upon him, with anxiety and interest, and all ears are eager to listen to him, he should proclaim clearly the line he intends to take. He should show that he is determined to "know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He should show that he feels it to be his great business—the one object of his life—to

preach to every one among his people, high and low, young and old, good and bad, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The love of God as revealed in Jesus—free and complete pardon, through His blood and His merits, to every believer—the change of heart by His Holy Spirit—holiness of life, from motives of grateful love and duty to a forgiving God—as these will form the great themes of his after-teaching, so should they be strongly and boldly put forth in his first sermon.

A solemn occasion is it certainly, as he stands in the pulpit face to face with his people for the first time. There they are before him—immortal souls, whose endless destiny may depend, more than he dares to think, upon his teaching. What an interest for him has each of those upturned faces!—every one bearing the impress of a spiritual history, in which he is, from this day forth, to take a prominent part for ever. Oh, if he could see into the souls that gaze through those attentive eyes—if he could see the sin, the rebellion, the stubbornness with which some are stained—the penitence, the anxiety, the struggle, the sorrow with which some are torn—the faith, the hope, the love, the joy, the earnest resolve with which others are swelling; he would tremble—not with nervousness about the impression he is about to make, but with awe at the thought of the tremendous responsibility he is undertaking. As the occasion is

so solemn, he should rouse all his energies to be equal to it. He should wrestle with his God in prayer beforehand, that "a mouth and wisdom" might be given him from above. Seriously and carefully should he consider in what terms he can most clearly put his message—how he can make it sound most startling, and yet most attractive. He has many objects to effect in that first sermon, and he must keep them vividly before him in preparation. He wants to win the sympathy of the congregation—to make them feel that he is one whom they can take to their hearts as a friend: he wants to gain their respect—to take his stand among them at once, not as a candidate for their favour, who is to be criticised or admired, but as a real minister of God, whose message to their souls is to be listened to with reverence: he wants to declare what that message is—to put it before them clearly and decidedly, so that all may feel that the trumpet is going to give no uncertain sound: but chiefly he wants, even in that first sermon, to do real good to their souls; though it is his first, he knows not whether it may not be his last, and so he is determined now, at all events, to preach to them Jesus—to force them to realize the heaven or hell that is before them—to press upon them the question whether they are with Christ or against Him—to beseech the unconverted to become reconciled to God—to tell them of the love and pity and

tenderness of the Saviour—to hold out to them the blessedness of being safe with Jesus—to gladden and cheer the Lord's own people—to urge them to cling closer, and give up their lives more entirely to Him whose they are, and whom they serve, and to look forward with greater love and hope to the bright day of His appearing. These are the objects he wants to effect in his sermon. Let him digest them thoroughly in his preparation; let him keep them firmly in mind while preaching; and then, even though he may have no eloquence of language nor graces of manner, that sermon will make the right kind of impression; the godly among the congregation will go home with lightened hearts, thanking their Lord for having sent them a faithful minister; and the worldly and thoughtless will at least feel that they have “a prophet among them.” Further results even than this may be revealed in the day of judgment.

This first sermon leads us to the subject of preaching in general. So blended with all his parochial work is the tone given to the parish by the minister's preaching, that it calls us to speak of it at the very outset.

Simple, earnest, evangelical, practical—thus can be described in a word the style of sermon that is really useful to the mass of our people. “*Really useful*”—and this is what the preacher should ever



aim to make it. But, hard as it is in every part of ministerial work to keep a single eye to God's glory and the good of souls, it is especially difficult to do so in preaching. Here the temptation to display—to seek the praise of men—is peculiarly busy. It inclines us perpetually to choose subjects that will be popular, rather than such as will be profitable, and to treat them in a manner that will please, rather than that will edify. Much of even truly good men's sermons is mere "clap-trap" on account of this. They cannot resist speaking in the tone that their "religious world" likes. They harp on popular truths, and defy the opponents of them, and grow very indignant about falsehoods which no one in the congregation holds. Thus they get credit for bold orthodoxy, and for being champions of the truth, while, perhaps, the very falsehoods and delusions that their congregations are really endangered by, they never touch upon. Popular errors, also, they are very apt to foster. They feel in their hearts that certain forms of expression are exaggerated; but they are exaggerations on the right side, and their people think them pious, and so they repeat them with unction. And they do all this in a great degree unconsciously. They would not deliberately pander to their people's tastes. From unnoticed beginnings, it has become habitual to have constantly present with them a secret regard to their reputation as evangelical preachers.

Unrecognized and almost unsuspected, this worldly element moulds the form of their expressions; and they, to whom have been entrusted powers sufficient to wrestle closely and successfully with the human heart, spend their strength too often in noisy declamation and paltry artifices to win popularity. The truer the doctrines preached by such men, the sadder their degradation into baits for human favour.

A more subtle form which this temptation assumes is keeping too much before the mind the desire to make the sermon *interesting*. A really profitable sermon will always interest; unless the attention and understanding are kept busy, it is not likely that the conscience will ever be touched;—but the desire to interest and the desire to benefit are quite distinct. And a desire to interest is not a legitimate motive for a sermon. There is but one object that the minister of God has a right to keep before him in his preaching—to do good to the souls committed to his charge. This, and nothing else, must he set his heart on in his pulpit ministrations. In accomplishing this object—in opening out the Word of God—in bringing its lessons to bear on the windings and turnings of man's heart—in applying more and more of its hid treasures to the comfort and strengthening and guiding of the Lord's little flock—the people will surely be interested, and interested deeply. But if once the minister puts out of sight this grand

object, and lays himself out to gratify the fancy and the intellect of his hearers, he descends from his high position as God's ambassador, and becomes one of the vulgar herd of self-seekers. Men may speak of him as an "interesting preacher," but his Master looks upon him as a deserter of his work.

After saying thus much, it is needless to waste words upon those tawdry tricks of style so often used, consciously and manifestly to gain admiration. They are wretched in point of taste, as well as faulty in their motive. A manly simplicity—a grave earnestness—are absolutely indispensable for a pure pulpit style. This gravity and simplicity of style, however, must not be supposed to imply baldness. Whatever illustrations are useful to make the subject clearer, whatever flights of imagination, whatever gleams of poetic thought naturally suggest themselves, or serve to awaken the hearers' sympathies, and carry their feelings along with the speaker, may be freely used. But adventitious ornaments, stuck on merely because they sound "fine," are utterly despicable.

These and other like dangers can only be guarded against by keeping ever present before the mind the single object just spoken of. In choosing the subject of discourse, and in determining how to treat it, the one great question ought always to be—"How can I do most real good?"

But in answering this question careful discretion must be used, otherwise permanent usefulness might be sacrificed to temporary excitement—healthy teaching neglected for the sake of transient emotion. Preachers intensely anxious to profit souls are in danger sometimes of being too exclusively *hortatory*. In their eagerness to “improve” Scripture, they are apt not to explain it enough. They make an exaggerated use of the earnest, though somewhat rhetorical, advice to preach as “dying unto dying men.” They forget that the majority of their congregation are likely to live for many years, and that it is their business to train them for life as well as for death—that they have to give them a spiritual *education*, which is to extend through many progressive lessons, and not merely a spiritual rousing in that one sermon.

The preacher ought, therefore, thoughtfully, and not impulsively, to make up his mind what Scriptural subjects, or course of subjects, will be most profitable to his congregation. In treating each one of these, though a longing desire to reach the conscience of his hearers should permeate all he says, yet he must not let himself be tempted to swerve aside from the work of his office, as an expounder of the Word of God. He must always feel it to be an imperative duty to show honestly and exactly what that passage was meant to teach—sure that God’s Word brought

home to the heart will do more real good than his "improvement" of it.

The choice of subjects for the pulpit would be too wide a field to be entered on at any length in an essay like the present. It would be more suited for discussion in a treatise on the special work of preaching, than in one which glances at preaching merely as one of the many wheels of parochial machinery.

The circumstances of his parish, the characters and conditions of its inhabitants, will, of course, influence each pastor in the choice of subjects for his sermons. In some places he will find the people well instructed in religious knowledge, through the teaching of schools and Sunday-schools, and the earnest preaching of his predecessors; in others, he will find gross ignorance, on account of the long-continued neglect of hireling shepherds. Here he will find a dull agricultural population; there, the intellectual activity of a busy town: here, again, the refinement of an educated aristocracy; there, the mingled vulgarity and honest energy of newly-made fortunes. In each of these neighbourhoods there will be different wants, different prejudices, different vices, a different general complexion of thought—he must vary the style of his preaching accordingly. An intimate knowledge of his people, acquired in house-to-house visiting, will enable him to do this almost instinctively. Having perceived in personal

intercourse the special characteristics of his flock, he will have special regard to them in his sermons.

Different times, too, in the same place, will call for different subjects of exhortation. There is a varying pulse in the life of a community, as well as in that of an individual. There are seasons, sometimes long seasons, of coldness—there are seasons of excitement and, as it were, contagious enthusiasm—there are seasons of order and submission, followed, perhaps, by seasons of impatience of outward guidance, and wayward leaving of old paths for new ways and new doctrines. The watchful minister, who spends many years in one parish, will see much of this, and, like a careful physician, he will change his medicine according to the changing pulse. Wakening appeals to the conscience, cheering and soothing encouragements, serious practical advice, clear doctrinal statements, and warnings against prevalent errors, will follow one another, in proportion as they are needed.

But underneath all this variety of characteristics, according to time and place, the general features of the human heart remain substantially the same always. There are the same great wants, the same great tendencies, the same great hopes and fears everywhere; and therefore, always and everywhere, the main leading topics of preaching must be the same also. Most of the objects which we spoke of

the preacher's having before him in his first sermon, he must have before him in every sermon. He never can stand in his pulpit without feeling that he has before him dead souls to be wakened, weak ones to be strengthened, sorrowing ones to be comforted. He never can stand there without feeling that his appointed business in that place is to preach Jesus Christ—to cause His work to be understood, His love to be felt and embraced.

Here, then, is the problem to be worked out: there must be variety, and yet there must be sameness. There must be progressive teaching—there must be the diligent exposition of Scripture truth—there must be the passing on from milk to strong meat—there must be the adaptation of God's Word to the special requirements of time and place; and yet there must be, over and over again, the preaching of the same everlasting Gospel. Life and death, heaven and hell—salvation in Jesus Christ—damnation without Him—must be clearly set before the hearers, *at least* in the great majority of the sermons preached: it is a matter for the individual conscience to decide whether it should not be so in every one.

The problem can only be solved by the tact that arises from the combined influences of a loving heart and a scripturally exercised judgment. And in practice there will not be found as much difficulty in its solution as there seems in theory. Each separate

Scripture truth—each divinely-inspired thought—has in it an elasticity which makes it wonderfully adapted to several spiritual uses. Various as are the objects you want to attain in your sermon, various as are the characters you want to help by it, when you have chosen the text which on the whole seems most suited for your purpose—when you have thought it over in its different aspects, and tried to draw out the fulness of its meaning, you will generally find that, without any straining or improving, it has materials for all the objects you are anxious to attain. While jealously keeping in view the main scope of the passage in its unity, you will be able to show how it suggests one line of thought useful for awakening, another for comforting, another for guiding in practice, &c., &c. Thus you can progress to new subjects, and reiterate the old ones at the same time. You can lead the sheep of the flock to green pastures, while still seeking over the mountains for the wanderers.

It is not good, however, to have *always* in our minds, as we preach, too conscious a reference to the different classes that we suppose are listening. God can often “divide” His Word better than we could. There is a possibility sometimes of our classifications being, to a certain degree, artificial. Besides, it has a monotonous effect if the preacher too continually “applies” his subject to distinctly marked groups.



And the people classify themselves probably in very different compartments from what he does, and so miss the application he intended for them, which, if it had not been so elaborately directed, would have perhaps reached them of itself.

It is better, therefore, every now and then, to be more "objective" in our preaching—to follow a course of subjects independent of the real or imaginary state of our people's feelings—to set before them forcibly important revealed truths, and to leave it to God to point the moral. The stated recurrence of our Church seasons, with the special subjects embodied in their appointed services, may sometimes help us in this plan.

Whatever be the subjects chosen, I should wish to impress very much upon the mind of a young preacher the necessity of being *definite* and *practical* in his treatment of them. Vagueness is a very common fault in sermons. General expressions are used, which sound well, but convey no real impression whatever to the uneducated part of the congregation. Such terms as "sinfulness," "holiness," "duty," familiar and homely as they seem, are too abstract to convey definite ideas, unless they are often reduced back to their concretes. Until we become intimately acquainted with the lower classes, it is impossible to imagine how much the simplest general terms pass over their minds without really

moving them. You must mention sins and duties by name, or your most earnest eloquence will have for them no meaning. You must speak of ill-tempers, selfishness, vanity in dress, gluttony, drunkenness, quarrels, love of money, evil-speaking, envy, and even grosser passions still. You must speak of patience, contentment, humility, giving up of self-will, forgiveness of offences, lowliness of mind, bridling of tongues, &c., &c. A few home-speaking discourses, in which faults and duties are thus dealt with plainly, particularly, and unmistakeably, will do more to awaken your hearers' conscience, and to bring them, under conviction of sin, to the Cross of Christ, than hundreds of beautiful sermons, which are too polished and elegant to mention ugly things by name.

Self-deceit is one of the most closely besetting dangers of the human heart. The more we study mankind, the more we perceive this. The young preacher, knowing that in God's sight all his hearers are divided into two widely separated classes, is apt to imagine that in their own sight there is the same accurate distinction; and so he thinks he has nothing to do but to call on the one set as urgently as he can to repent and believe, and to speak to the other words of comfort. But, alas! there is one difficulty yet, whose greatness he will soon begin to feel more and more deeply. Most people, as was hinted above,

do not recognize the class they belong to. When an address is made to the "unconverted," it is wonderful how few take the words to themselves. The majority of the congregation, by the jugglery of self-deceit, persuade themselves that they are religious.

In order to tear away this veil of self-flattery, close, direct dealing with the particulars of sin and holiness is most necessary. Speaking of the emotions of penitence and faith and love is not sufficient. A dishonest heart can deceive itself as much as it pleases in the region of the feelings. "The works of the flesh," and the "fruits of the Spirit," put before the conscience distinctly, form a test which it is harder to tamper with. How plain-spoken St. Paul is on these points. How often and how vividly he enumerates the faults of the corrupt heart. How beautifully he paints the various practical details of the Christian character. How hard it is for the self-satisfied and Satan-deluded heart to sit at ease under 1 Cor. xiii.; Gal. v. 22, 23; Col. iii. 12-17; Phil. ii. 1-5, &c., &c. But why need we refer to the example even of an inspired Apostle? Have we not our Lord Himself as a model of teaching in this respect? How minutely definite, how intensely practical, are his exhortations! Read Mat. xxiii. for a pattern of straightforward, unflinching exposure of vice. Read the Sermon on the Mount for an example of plain-dealing, heart-reaching, practical teaching.

Even if we knew not that the Speaker was Divine, we could not help feeling that he was a nobly earnest man, with a purpose and meaning in his heart which he was determined should be distinctly expressed. How poor and mawkish our vague generalities sound beside these bold home-thrusts! Doubtless, if we followed these inspired examples more faithfully, there would be in our congregations less of self-deceit, less of unreality, and less of mere religious sentimentalism.

But it must not be imagined that it is only in order to lead self-deceivers to a knowledge of their true position, that practical preaching is required. To convince of sin, and thus to be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, is one of its uses, but not its only use. The Lord's own justified people need practical teaching continually. A miserable perversion of the truth is that style of theology which would say—"Teach them to believe, and then leave their practice to take care of itself. Plant the root, and the fruits will follow spontaneously." There is not a page of the New Testament but contradicts such a theory; there is not a converted soul whose history does not show its insufficiency. All the Epistles are addressed to believers; and yet they contain almost (if not quite) as much of practical direction as of doctrinal statement. The same, but to a greater degree, is the case with our Lord's

addresses to the seven Churches. It is a sad fact, that, "even in the regenerate," the old "infection of nature remains;" that sincere, believing Christians often give way to anger, pride, covetousness, self-will, worldliness, ostentation, &c., &c. Christians of the lower classes of life especially, whose consciences have not been made sensitive by a refined education, and who are, from long habit, rough and impulsive in all they do and say, often show an inconsistency between their conduct and profession which makes us tremble. A very important part of the duty of the pastor is to educate the moral faculties of such people. He must train them into habits of watchfulness and self-restraint. He must teach them to know, and love, and follow the revealed will of God in the details of their actual life. He must not be kept back from his duty by a weak fear of "preaching works," or a selfish dread of injuring his reputation as a preacher of free salvation. If he is the Christian minister I suppose him to be, he *could not* "preach works." The sinner's perfect acceptance with God through faith in Jesus Christ, antecedent to the possibility of good works, is so impressed on his heart as the foundation of true religion, that he could no more ignore it in his sermons than he could ignore the laws of gravitation in teaching astronomy. If he thoroughly feels and lives on the great evangelical doctrines, they will

imbue all he says with their own spirit; he can go on simply giving his whole attention to the subject immediately before him, without the perpetual, conscious effort to drag them in. As to the fear about his reputation—"Get thee behind me, Satan," is the tone in which the mean feeling must be driven away, whenever it dares to interfere between him and the honest desire to preach what he believes to be useful.

The minister who most closely watches over his own spiritual life will be the most helpful preacher to others. Speak of dangers you have yourself felt; show, with the knowledge drawn from experience, how they can best be resisted, and you will be sure to speak home to the hearts of others. "How is it," I have often heard asked of such preaching, "how is it that my minister seems to know exactly what I feel? How is it that his sermons seem to be spoken directly to me? How is it that he tells me so accurately of my own very difficulties and faults and troubles, and points out remedies and comforts and means of strength that are just what I want?" The secret is, that he knows *himself* well. He does not talk of imaginary things, or things read of in books. He is *real* in what he says, because he speaks of what he has known and felt.

There are some clergymen who, under the influence of an exaggerated reaction against false schools

of theology, suspect and perhaps slightly despise the practical tone of preaching here recommended. I would most earnestly deprecate such a feeling. It must be very displeasing to their Lord, and very hurtful to the spiritual growth of their flocks. The Father is glorified by His people's bearing much fruit: is it unworthy of our pains to try to increase and foster this fruit? Jesus and His Apostles laboured much in practical teaching: are we more enlightened than they? No: the more we realize our standing-point, as "accepted in the Beloved"—made one with Christ—so much the more should we strive ourselves to grow up after His image in our daily life, and so much the more should we labour to affirm constantly that "they which have believed in God be careful to maintain good works."

With two or three more suggestions I will conclude these remarks upon preaching.

Try always to keep a distinct *unity* in each sermon. Do not be too anxious to say everything at once. Let your hearers carry away some one well-marked idea—some one truth placed in two or three different but harmonizing lights—some one text, divided indeed into its leading thoughts, but so that the text itself is left ringing in the memory. Let your divisions be few, distinct, and striking, so as to help and not mar the oneness of the general impression.

*Avoid monotony* in the tone of feeling, as well as in the delivery of the sermon. Do not be too intense all through. Let there be, even as in a good picture, a judicious balancing of light and shade. Let there be a calm quietness sometimes, a solemn impressiveness at other times, occasionally—not more than once or twice in each sermon—a passionate earnestness. Make a free, but not too continual, use of *questions*. In the hortatory parts of your sermons, especially, press home close questions as to how your hearers feel and act, in such a way as to show you insist on their being answered in the conscience.

Whether you preach extempore or from manuscript, learn to *look your congregation straight in the face*. Not with a nervous, flickering gaze, but steadily, deliberately, and attentively, let your eye pass from one to another; showing that you are really speaking to them, that you mean what you say, and that you intend it to be listened to. Though this is naturally difficult to some, practice and determination will almost always enable it to be done.

In preparation do not read too much (except in your Bible) for each particular sermon. Let your mind be well stored by general habits of study: draw upon that previously acquired store, but do not confuse your thoughts, or lose the originality and idiosyncrasy of your views, by reading what others have thought, instead of thinking yourself on the



subject before you. Other men may have preached on it better than you; but it is *you*, and not they, whom God is now sending to preach to your congregation. Of course this rule must often be modified—subjects that we are ignorant on must be cleared up by competent authorities—we must seek help in difficulties from many sources; but on the whole it is a good rule.

In preparation also, place often before your mind's eye a picture of your actual congregation. Fill up the pews of your church in imagination with their accustomed occupants. Fancy you see, here the heavy old farmer, here the sorrowful widow in her weeds, here the bright-eyed girl, here the gay, thoughtless youth, here the refined and educated gentleman. Thus your preparation will be made to run into the channel most suited for being of use to those particular people, and you will be prevented following lines of thought interesting to yourself, but unprofitable to them. If you write your sermons, this plan will be specially useful. It will give to your writing something of the warmth and earnestness of a direct address.

Before preparing your text for the pulpit, think it over in reference to yourself. Try to feel its teaching, before you attempt to express it. So, your words, coming from the heart, will be most likely to reach to the heart.

I do not wish here to re-open the vexed question as to the merits of written or extempore sermons. I think myself, that unless the congregation is very fastidious, and unless the preacher is very deficient in the power of utterance, well-digested extempore preaching is generally the most effective. I think this is especially the case in a parish where the majority of the people are uneducated. But let every one be "fully persuaded in his own mind." If you conscientiously feel you can do most good to your people by a written sermon, write — if by an extempore address, preach without writing. Watchful experience will make you a better judge of the matter yourself than any adviser at a distance could be. But whatever be your method of preaching, let your diction be plain and unaffected. Let the eloquence of your sermon consist in the force and fervour of its thoughts, not in the grandeur of its words. Let your object be to send your people home thinking of the subject you put before them, not thinking of the beauty of the sermon in which it was conveyed.

## CHAPTER II.

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### PERSONAL INTERCOURSE.

UNDER the head of "personal intercourse," I include every means by which we can accomplish close dealing with the individual souls under our care. We must be on the watch to *obtain* opportunities for this as well as to use them. People do not come to us as to the Romish priests, for confession. To find them coming to us even for advice and sympathy, is unfortunately the exception rather than the rule. We have to seek them, therefore, since they are not in the habit of seeking us. It is so important to know our people personally, and to have some idea of what is going on in their hearts, that we must grudge no trouble in obtaining this end. And it is only by seizing boldly every opportunity that offers itself of being alone with one of them, that we can in the long run succeed in having hand-to-hand work with the great body of our flock. You meet one man walking on the road, you see another working in the field, you find a third by himself in his room—perhaps laid up with sickness; sometimes there are two

or three of a family together, so intimate that they can speak as freely in each other's presence as if they were alone—such are your opportunities. Each one you must grasp, with the resolution—"Now or never."

Assistants in shops, servants, the different members of a family in more respectable houses, you can ask to see privately; many of the poorer people, who live near, you can request to come and speak to you in your own house; some few, awakened and anxious, will be eager of their own accord to seek for interviews with you; but the great majority of your flock—the hard-worked labourers, the busy mothers, the careless, the vicious, the distant and much-occupied people of all kinds—you can only meet in private intercourse on such apparently chance occasions as I have spoken of. Whether some more systematic plan of personal intercourse might or might not be brought in as an established custom in our Church—whether it would be possible or healthy to have the regular private communication of the confessional, without its abuses and superstitions—is a question that has often been debated. But meanwhile, the state of things is, in point of fact, as I have described it, and you must act accordingly.

Set it before you, therefore, as an object to be watchfully sought after, to find opportunities of speaking to your people by themselves. This is

the first step. I do not mean that this is the first thing you have to do in your parish—the gaining of a general knowledge of your parishioners, and the winning of their general sympathy and confidence will naturally precede it—but this is the first step in that great work which I wish now to speak of—close, personal, face-to-face, soul-to-soul intercourse.

How to use the opportunity when found is the next point for consideration. Here all the wisdom and tact and love of the pastor are called forth. The opportunity is precious: it comes but seldom: he can probably preach to this person now by his side ten times in public for the once he can see him in private; so he must make earnest use of the golden hour. But that one conversation may produce more effect in the hearer's heart, than all the sermons he has ever listened to. Oh, how fervently the prayer should be breathed up to heaven, that God may give strength to use those precious moments to advantage.

An important difference between preaching and private intercourse is, that in the former you are only a speaker, while in the latter you are a listener also. In the one case you are an ambassador delivering a message, in the other you are a physician feeling the pulse. See that you carry out this distinction between the two works. Take care that your private conversation is not merely another form of preaching. Do not be too eager to give your

advice. Let your first endeavour be really to understand the state of your parishioner's mind. You must try to draw him out by judicious questionings, and to encourage him to speak freely by sympathizing attention to what he says. Do not be in too great a hurry to pounce down on his mistaken expressions, and show him how unorthodox are his views. Let him tell his story in his own way.

In polite society, the art of *listening well* is considered the most important qualification for thoroughly agreeable conversation. It is equally important in pastoral intercourse. You must be as truly polite with your humblest parishioner—as considerate for his feelings, as ready with your attention and sympathy for all he has to say—as you would be with a lady in her drawing-room. And you must not only listen kindly, but you must help him to speak. If he is shy and reserved, try to put him at his ease: gently lead him on by questions and suggestions: if he is over-talkative and rambling, keep him to the point, good-humouredly but pertinaciously. Remember your object in this private intercourse. You want first to find out how the man's soul stands with God; you want to know whether he is really in earnest about his eternal interests; you want to know whether he has indeed come as a penitent to his Saviour, and laid the burden of his sins upon Him; you want to know also whether he is advancing or

retrograding in his spiritual life—whether he is diligently on the watch against his besetting sins—whether he realizes habitually his Lord's presence, and is taking trouble and denying himself to serve Him—or whether he is falling from his first love, letting himself be drawn into worldliness or sloth, or allowing some deceitful form of sin to ensnare him. You want to have some idea at least of this his inward state, before you attempt to help him with advice. Try by every means to get him to open out his mind freely on these matters.

There are some who imagine that this is to be done always by a series of direct home questions. Not to such rough dealing as this will the heart's secrets generally yield themselves. It needs more patience, more skill, more tenderness, to reach to the inmost realities of the soul. These plain questions have their use, and ought in some cases to be pressed strongly home. It is well at times to shake the careless soul with a rough grip—to force the man to stand face to face with his own position. He secretly knows it, but he will not realize it. He hides his eyes from it, and goes on his way, occupied with other thoughts. Direct questions here are useful—questions as to his readiness to meet his God—as to the way in which his life is spent—as to the prospects which he sees before him for eternity—as to his reception of the Saviour's promises. When

the man knows his state, these questions help him to feel it and to be ashamed of it.

But often you want to know more about the man than he knows himself. He is ignorant, or self-deceived, or leaning on false stays; perhaps his religious consciousness has never been sufficiently awakened for him to have any idea at all of what state he is in; and so he is self-satisfied; your questions do not convince him; they rebound from the armour with which dulness and self-flattery have encased him; he is ready to answer them all in the tone which his self-satisfaction or his spiritual blindness prompts. Or perhaps he is in a state of real perplexity about himself. He feels such a mixture of good and evil within him that he does not know what to think. There are so many conflicting elements there—such a mingling of hope and fear—of trust and despondency, of effort and inconsistency, that he could give no definite answer to your plain questions. There are various degrees of this spiritual uncertainty. Some are uncertain from want of thorough honesty and decision of inward thought—some from timidity and excessive sensitiveness of nature—some from confusion of ideas and want of clear Scriptural knowledge. Requiring a definite answer to home questions would produce unreality of expression in some of these—others it would pain and perplex, and send shrinking inwards, in-



stead of expanding and opening under your loving influence.

You cannot, then, lay down any stereotyped plan, either in the way of questioning or any other way, for arriving at the knowledge of your people's spiritual state. Each person must be dealt with as thoughtfully, and with as much special attention, as if there were no one else in the world but he. His natural character, his circumstances, his education, his habits of speaking and thinking, must be taken into consideration, and the way of treating him varied accordingly. Stirring questions to arouse or convince—gentler ones to lead on conversation—sympathizing suggestions to help the expression of what is felt—all must be used with loving discrimination, as the nature of the case requires.

But this spiritual diagnosis, if we may use the expression, though an important object in personal intercourse, is only important as preparing the way to further objects. You want to know your parishioner's state of mind in order to give him the help he needs.


And often what he needs most is that very knowledge of himself that you have been seeking after. You can form but imperfect guesses of what is going on within him; nevertheless you can, in many cases, see but too clearly facts to which he is blind. The greater number of people you speak to, you probably

find to be in melancholy ignorance about their own condition. You cannot help seeing that they are only half in earnest; that they have the form and shell of godliness, without its vitality; that they are satisfied with a routine of religious acts, and with conventional expressions of penitence and faith, while the will is not really bowed down in allegiance to God. But they do not see this themselves; they know not that they are "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." It is your task, in your private intercourse, to labour to awaken in them a sense of their danger. We spoke, in the previous chapter, of efforts to do this in the pulpit; but now that you are standing face to face with the self-deceiver, and can reason with him, and drive him from one false refuge to another, your opportunity of succeeding is much greater. But care must be taken not to hurt the man's pride too rudely, or else the self-justifying spirit will be up in arms, and all you say will be looked upon only as an attack to be resisted. Little good can be done if you have roused him to defend himself, instead of to examine himself. Here is where the loving tact spoken of before comes into play. To convince, without piquing—to humble, without irritating—to lift gently the self-righteous coverings off the heart, and show the man himself as he is, without stirring up the opposition of wounded vanity—to be clear and unflinching, and still affec-

tionate and sympathising—to make the conscience accuse, without taking up the position of an accuser yourself; to do all this perfectly would require the tenderness and wisdom of an angel—to do it as far as in him lies must be the daily endeavour of every faithful pastor.

It would be tedious and unnecessary to enumerate the various considerations which should be pressed upon a person whom we are thus anxious to bring to a knowledge of the sinfulness in which he is so unconsciously living. The intense holiness and purity of God—the awful strictness of His law, extending to thoughts and motives as well as acts—the fact that he who offends in one point is guilty of all—the exceeding sinfulness of what are generally called little sins—the beauty of the Christian character, as described in the New Testament—the love, the joy, the peace, the unselfishness, the heavenly-mindedness it supposes—the wonderful generosity and self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus—the longsuffering with which He bears with us, the affection with which He treats us, and the deep gratitude which this love of His should call forth on our part—all these topics should be brought to bear. When other means have failed, I have sometimes found that questions suggestive of sins of omission have seemed to startle: *e.g.*, “What do you do for the Lord’s sake? How do you work for His glory? What self-denial or exertion do you

go through, purely and simply for love of Him?" A description of the glory of heaven—of the splendour and majesty of the Lord's people there—I have also found useful in awakening the self-deceiver to a sense of his unworthiness. At all events exert every energy of your mind not to let such a person leave you until some arrow has sped home, until some breach in his self-complacency has been effected, until you feel that he is, in some degree at least, less at ease with himself than he was before. At the conclusion of your interview (if circumstances make it possible) get him to kneel down beside you, and then pour out a short but fervent prayer that God the Holy Ghost may come into his heart, may enlighten him and teach him, and bring him, with a contrite spirit, to the cross of Christ.



## CHAPTER III.

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### PERSONAL INTERCOURSE—CONTINUED.

ALTHOUGH, perhaps, as was noticed in the last chapter, the greater number of those whom we have to deal with are in danger from blindness as to their real state; yet we meet many also who labour under morbid self-consciousness.

There are some whose hearts are awakened to a sense of guilt, and who have not yet learned to cast the burden of it upon their Saviour. They are alarmed and anxious; they try to do their duty; their thoughts are often busied with their eternal interests, but there is no freedom in their service. They feel as slaves, rather than sons. Preparation for death is their principal idea of religion. They cannot look forward to the future with any gladness; there is too much of terror mingled with it. The consciousness of their sins weighs down their spirits. They are for ever looking inwards—thinking about themselves, mourning over their faults, losing sight altogether of peace and joy in believing.

Now, in dealing with such people, the pastor must

first try to find out the real cause of their doubts and fears. Sometimes a doubting and unhappy condition of this kind arises from the heart not being thoroughly honest with itself and with God. There is something "kept back." There is some known habit of sin wilfully continued in; there is some cherished indulgence, some unlawful gain, some old rankling bitterness, that has not been unreservedly offered up on the altar to God. Thus the conscience is tampered with, and it will not let its owner be at peace. The right hand or the right foot has not been cut off and cast away, and therefore it is still an "offence." The pastor must probe deeply to find whether there is any dishonesty of this kind underneath; for if there is, all his arts of healing are in vain until it is removed. There must be no soothing anodynes, no crying of "peace, peace," no holding out of the comforting promises of Christ, until this "unclean thing" is tracked to its hiding-place, and given up.

But sometimes a painful state of mind like this arises from ignorance of Gospel truth. The complete acceptance of the believer—his union with Christ—his reception into present favour with God—has never been fully understood. There is an idea that, in the end—at the day of judgment—God will, perhaps, for Christ's sake, pardon the penitent; and, accordingly, there is perpetual anxiety, lest after all,

this distant forgiveness should never actually be reached. In some form or another, I have generally noticed that this radical mistake—looking on pardon as a thing future, instead of present—lies at the bottom of all the unnecessary self-torture that arises from ignorance.

It is a satisfaction to the minister when he can trace doubt to this source. For here the remedy is, comparatively speaking, within his power. He must explain, in its simplicity and its fulness, the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith. He must show, by plain, clear texts from the Bible, how the believer in the Lord Jesus need not wait for a future pardon, but has it now. The *present* position of the weakest human being, who has come to his Saviour in humble trust—his present position as God's child, looked upon by his Father with the most intense love, through the Redeemer's merits—must be much dwelt upon. Thus the poor harassed heart must be led away from its perpetual inward searching. The cheering view of the Saviour's finished work must be opened before it, till its disquiet, and anxiety, and restless alternation between hope and fear, are exchanged for peace with God through Jesus Christ.

Very often, however, distressing doubts are neither caused by cherished sin nor by ignorance of revealed truth, but arise from natural despondency or morbid-

ness of constitution. Amidst the mighty change effected by the Holy Ghost in the soul of a converted man, the individual peculiarities of his natural character remain—the tone of his nervous system, and the tendencies of his physical organization are unaltered. And these peculiarities, independently of his will, exercise a continual influence on his religious feelings. Hence if he is naturally inclined to take a gloomy or anxious view of ordinary matters, he will find himself constantly inclined to take a gloomy view of his own spiritual condition also.

Thus it is that even earnest and enlightened Christians come to us so often with sad complaints of the doubts and fears that overshadow their lives, and refuse to be driven away. Sometimes causes similar to those mentioned just now, may have a share in producing them. There has not been enough of close walking with God, and so the light of His countenance has been partly withdrawn; the promises of Christ, and the revelations of His love have not been enough lived upon, and so miserable self has been too much before the eyes. But we can often see that it is from constitutional, rather than moral or intellectual causes, the sadness arises. Here we must soothe, by showing that it is a trial to be borne, rather than a sin to be wept for. We must remind the sufferers of the Saviour's tender



sympathy and understanding of our infirmities. We must counsel them, while offering often the prayer, "Lord, I believe : help thou mine unbelief," to busy themselves as much as possible with work for the Lord—as little as possible with the state of their own feelings. Upward looking, onward treading—are the two great mottoes for a heart morbidly inclined to self-inspection. Diligent labour for the Lord will do it more good than the wisest arguments ever spoken.

But every now and then, we meet in our personal intercourse, souls afflicted with darker and more painful doubts than those just spoken of. If we have much to do with young men of the educated classes, we shall probably find a good many of them tried by sceptical difficulties. Clergymen, who do not keep up close intercourse with all ranks of their people, have no idea how much growing infidelity there may be in the hearts of some of the gentlemanly, well-conducted young men, who sit in their churches every Sunday with serious countenances. It is not now as it used to be, when infidelity was an excuse for vice—fled to as a refuge by the wilfully profligate. Many of the purest-hearted and most earnest-minded among our young men have to battle sorely against its attacks. They have been educated religiously from childhood ; they have been trained to

understand and love the doctrines of religion, while knowing little or nothing of the evidences of its truth; they have then plunged into scientific studies, or intellectual pursuits of various kinds, in which the mind is accustomed to investigate accurately, to expect proof for every thing, to bring all subjects to be judged at the bar of reason. The more deeply they feel about religion, the sooner is this habitual tendency of the mind likely to turn in that direction. But, from a confusion between the *evidences* of Revelation, and the *subjects* of revelation, they have always had impressed upon them an idea that it was wrong to entertain the slightest question about the truth of religion—that it ought to be taken on trust—that inquiry there partook of the nature of unbelief. And so there has come to be a morbid state of mind on the point; the reason claiming its rights, the conscience resisting and denouncing them; the reason asking loudly, “Why do you believe?” the conscience replying, shudderingly, “You must not dare to press that question.” And the result is a longing to believe, a determination of the will to continue believing, and yet a secret fear, deep down in the intellect, that perhaps after all there is no real ground for believing. While they are in this unsatisfactory state, scientific treatises are studied, proving, beyond possibility of doubt, physical facts inconsistent with views supposed to be set forth in

Scripture; books are read, apparently marked by reverence and candour, in which various parts of the Bible are quietly set aside as "mythical," or "unhistorical;" companions are associated with, who, in the same tone of lofty condescension, speak of the Christian Revelation, as an interesting development of the ethical element in man, bearing, amidst much beauty, manifold traces of the infantine age of the world's growth in which it took its rise.

Thus, gradually, the breach between reason and faith is widened—so gradually, and almost unconsciously, that there has never been a sufficiently marked step to suggest the necessity of looking the evidences of the old faith straight in the face, and seeing whether they will or will not satisfy the reason. And when at last these evidences are referred to, they come in at a disadvantage. The tone of the mind has become unfavourable to their reception. The general current of its habitual opinions is running against them, and a current set with the strength of habit is hard to be turned.

And all this time, while the convictions of childhood have been loosening and passing away, while the doubts of manhood have been darkly and painfully taking their place, there has been no outward sign of the change. The life has been moral and upright; the forms of religion respectfully attended to; its hold on the life and heart has not altogether

ceased, though its hold on the understanding is gone. The distracting doubts have been mentioned to no one except to those who feel the same. Mothers and sisters must not be distressed by knowing of feelings they would consider horrible. Clergymen are shrunk from, partly because it is supposed they would not understand the difficulties, partly because it is feared they would only denounce and anathematize. And with their dreary secret pent up within their breasts, the wretched men live on, seeking rest and finding none—finding no certain ground anywhere on which to stand; not sure of an atonement, not sure of a Saviour, not sure of a Providence, not sure of an immortality, not sure, sometimes, even of a God.

I have dwelt thus at length upon this state of mind—this gradual rise and growth of unbelief without what is called vice—because I am led by observation to look upon it as the “typical form” of the scepticism now prevalent among young men. I am the more anxious to do so also, because I fear some of our brethren, in their zeal for the truth, are neither as kind nor as wise as they might be in the treatment of such cases. They take it for granted too often that sceptics are willingly blind—that they do not believe because they do not wish to believe—that their doubts are altogether their fault,

not at all their misfortune. This was the old cry, at a time when it was truer than now; they seem able to do nothing but re-echo it.

And a poor helper of a soul struggling in the agonies of doubt is the minister who has no sympathy for its difficulties—nothing but recrimination for its faults. Doubtless, wherever there is unbelief, there have been grave moral faults at work. Impatience, indolence, moral cowardice, intellectual pride, want of persevering, prayerful research—these have contributed to produce the sad result. But these are not the coarse faults commonly supposed. And, true as it is, that in many cases “the wish is father to the thought,” and what is disliked is readily disbelieved; and, likely as it is, that much vulgar, ale-house infidelity is traceable to this cause; yet it is important to remember also, that in many minds a strong desire for a thing to be true, causes a morbid uneasiness about it, and that which is most wished for it is hardest to be convinced of. Hence it is sometimes the very hearts who feel most keenly that all their hopes are bound up with Christ, who are most tortured with doubts as to the security of that foundation on which their all depends. And, as Bishop Butler, with his wonderful insight into human nature, observes, minds that are most free from the ordinary and grosser forms of temptation, often find their peculiar trial and probation in scept-

tical difficulties.\* Sad, indeed, would it be if souls, suffering under this most terrible of spiritual trials, were to meet from him who is appointed to be their helper and comforter only barren rebukes and trite exhortations against faults of which they know nothing. Not thus did the Great Shepherd deal with the sceptical Thomas. He knew that his doubts arose, not from unwillingness to believe, but partly from natural constitution, and partly from that morbidly anxious love that showed itself so plainly on another occasion (John xi. 16); and though He could speak sternly enough when He saw that men would not believe because they loved darkness rather than light, or could not believe because they sought for honour one from another, yet in this case He utters no reproaches, terrifies by no threats, but, tenderly and sympathisingly, gives to the doubting spirit the evidence that it required to convince it. Strong proof first, gentle warning afterwards, tender sympathy all through—such was the Saviour's treatment of His sceptical disciple.

Such, also, must be ours in similar cases. It is well to assure ourselves first that the case that comes under our notice *is* similar; that the sceptic is not a vain trifler, playing at infidelity—re-echoing captious objections in order to show off his knowledge, or gain himself a character as an independent thinker; not a

\* Analogy, Part II., Chap. VI.

self-willed enemy, cavilling at the truth he hates, but a really earnest inquirer, anxious to see his way amidst the difficulties that harass and perplex him. And when we have satisfied ourselves that he is indeed such, we must treat him in the same spirit in which the Saviour treated Thomas. We must enter into his difficulties—look upon them from his point of view, not ours, and try to throw ourselves into his state of mind, so as to feel the kind of arguments he needs. The great thing is to say, not what we consider is the proper thing to say, but simply what is likely to convince *him*. A sympathising imagination alone can find this out.

It would be, of course, impossible here to enter at any length upon the arguments to be used. We must each, if we are at all thrown into contact with sceptics, try to become thoroughly well versed in the great controversy, so as to be able to take up any branch of it that may be necessary. If we feel that we are, by natural deficiency, (not by ignorance that we could remedy,) weak or confused debaters, our best plan, perhaps, is to make ourselves acquainted with the ablest books written on the subject, so as to know how to recommend one or another according as we perceive its line of argument would be best suited to the individual case—in every instance insisting on the study of Butler's Analogy as a preparatory step, in order to correct the hastiness of judgment

and impatience of suspense or difficulty with which most scepticism is connected. But largely as we may, and indeed always ought, to use the books of masters of the subject, if possible we should take part ourselves in unravelling the perplexities of our poor patient.

The following suggestions may help in so doing :—

(a.) Be careful not to allow the evidences for the *truth of Christianity* to be confounded with the evidences for the *inspiration of the Bible*. The two subjects are quite distinct. Both are weakened if they are confused together. Make this distinction be clearly understood by the sceptic. In nine cases out of ten, the greater number of his objections are objections, not, as he fancies, against the truth of the Christian religion, but against the inspiration of some or all of the books of the Scriptures. Geological, historical, or critical difficulties in the Old Testament narratives—discrepancies or inconsistencies in those of the New—strained quotations of prophecies or applications of types—extravagancies and narrowness of mind and national prejudices apparent, as he thinks, in the writings of the Prophets themselves—such are the difficulties he is probably perplexed by. On account of these, he feels as if all those blessed doctrines of life and immortality on which, from childhood, he had rested, were fading away from him like “the baseless fabric of a dream.”



Before you enter into these difficulties in detail, therefore, it is important to make him see exactly how far they reach, exactly how much or how little they would prove, if valid. Show him how the evidence for the main facts of the Christian history is untouched by them. Give up, for the present, the inspiration of the sacred books; let it be granted, for a moment, that they bear the marks of human frailty and human ignorance. Confine yourself simply to the ground we have for feeling convinced of the *truthfulness* of the Gospel story as a whole. The facts of Christ having lived, worked miracles, died, risen again, and taught, in the main, the doctrines ascribed to Him in the New Testament—show the marvellous concentration of proofs by which these are established. Glance over this evidence in all its variety, internal and external, touching on the absurdities and contradictions in which we should be involved if we refused to yield to it, and then point out how completely independent it is of the doctrine of inspiration; how we must acknowledge the substantial reality of the New Testament narrative, even though Matthew and John should turn out to have been only ordinary witnesses, writing according to their human memories; Moses only a fallible historian; David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah only “wrapt” and extatic poets, with the inspiration of a Dante, a Milton, or a Goethe. When you have made this

point clear, an important step has been taken. The sceptic is led to feel that, perplexing as are his difficulties, they are not so fatal as he imagined. They rob him of much, but they need not rob him of everything. They deprive him of the Bible, as a "lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path," but they need not deprive him of Christ as a Saviour—of heaven as a home. In spite of his difficulties and objections he can still believe that God revealed Himself to man in Jesus, and that through Him he has hope of eternal life.\* Stay with him here for a while. Low as it is, settle him firmly on this foundation. Let all your energies be devoted to strengthening him in the belief of the simple *facts* of Christianity. Keep him as much as possible from confusing his mind with corollaries from these facts, until they themselves are rooted and grounded in his heart. Until you are sure that he believes in

\* To believe in the facts of Christianity, and yet to reject the inspiration of the Bible, is, in reality, a logical contradiction, inasmuch as some of those facts necessarily involve that inspiration. In the same way, to believe in the facts of Christ's life, and yet to deny His divinity, is a contradiction, inasmuch as this also is involved in the facts. Still, we know that in the latter case, in spite of the contradiction, there are minds which do receive the facts without the deductions which properly follow from them. In both cases alike the grounds of evidence are distinct and successive. The facts must first be proved on their own evidence. These facts themselves then become the evidence for the further deduction.

"Jesus and the Resurrection" do not trouble him about believing anything else.

And then, when you have him firmly established here, you have a "*πῶς οὖν*" for your further arguments. When he feels the general truthfulness of the Gospel History, you can show him how its credibility involves and carries with it the idea of inspiration; you can show him what position the Apostles held, what commission they were entrusted with, what help they were promised; you can point out the light in which they looked on their own writings, the expressions they used about them, and the manner in which both they and the Lord Himself spoke of the Old Testament Scriptures. You can then go further back to show how the Jewish History, with its laws, prophecies, types, and ritual, attached to a vast framework of miraculous events, is so intimately blended with the facts of Christianity, that, independently of its own special evidence, the proofs that establish the latter establish the former at the same time. Thus, stone by stone, you can proceed to build up again for him the whole fabric of his shaken and almost ruined faith; only the first stone, specially, securely, and separately laid, must be the reception of the facts of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. And this not only acts as a foundation for the rest of the superstructure, but also prepares the way for its erection. When once a man

thoroughly believes that Jesus Christ is a reality—that He is indeed the mighty God and the crucified Saviour—the sceptical tone of his mind is to a great degree remedied. A more reverent spirit comes over his intellect. He does not feel so continually inclined to doubt and cavil at every difficulty; and it is more easy to lead him on to see Divinity shining out of every page of the Bible, even though clouded by many things hard to be reconciled with its majesty. The difficulties he felt of old were not indeed such as *ought* to have shaken his faith in the reality of Christ's existence; they had logically nothing to say to that subject; but practically they *did*. Knowing that Christianity and Bible-inspiration were entwined together so closely in their branches, he did not see the independence of their roots; and when doubts made him tremble for the one, he thought the other must come crashing along with it. You, by your arguments, have shown him the separate roots; you have shown him proofs of Christ's miracles and resurrection, which are the same whether the Bible is or is not inspired; by so doing, you have dispelled a fatal confusion from his mind, you have removed from him the terror that blinded his eyes, you have helped him, amidst all his doubts, to keep a firm hold of Christ, and keeping that hold of Him with one hand, he will soon be able to drive away every perplexity with the other.

(b.) Such a mode of argument applies, of course, only in cases where the difficulties felt are chiefly connected with the nature and contents of the Bible. If the objections urged are the insufficiency of evidence, the impossibility of miracles, the incredibility of doctrines taught, a different, and a wider course must be taken. For the direct, common-sense evidences, the standard eighteenth century apologists supply ample materials: for the modern difficulties, the books lately written ought to be studied. Amidst the many masterly refutations of "Essay and Review" theories, written both before and after the publication of that melancholy volume, I feel it would be presumption to recommend any in particular; I would only say that there is a wide class of difficulties, felt by many minds, more satisfactorily met by the line of thought carried out in "Mansel's Bampton Lectures on the Limits of Religious Thought," than any other book I am acquainted with. His essay on miracles, also, in "Aids to Faith," contains valuable suggestions. In saying this, I do not mean to endorse all his opinions, but simply to bear testimony to the practical good effect I have known his writings to have on troubled minds, by making them perceive that their difficulties were not peculiarly attached to the doctrines of Revelation, but were inseparable from the operations of the human intellect, in its endeavours to contemplate the "Infinite."

(c.) In your arguments endeavour, as much as possible, to keep the offensive rather than the defensive side. Do not let yourself be continually driven to answer objections. Sometimes you will see that you *must* do so, and that you can do so with profit—that difficulties which you can easily remove are a great hindrance to the acceptance of any arguments. But as soon as you can, change your position. Bring up your masses of positive proofs. Attack unbelief vigorously with *your* questions and *your* difficulties. Ply the sceptic with objections against any theory of accounting for the phenomena of Christianity except the true one. He can easily puzzle you and almost silence you, if your part of the discussion is to solve all the perplexities that he finds in Revelation; but when you turn the tables, and ask him to remove the difficulties and inconsistencies on the opposite side—when you bring forward proof after proof to show the certainty of the things we have believed, in spite of all the difficulties with which they are connected, your task is much easier—success much more probable.

And this is not merely a strategic manœuvre to secure victory in a war of words; it is the natural and proper position for us to take as ministers of the Gospel. We do not profess to be able to remove all difficulties. We feel many ourselves. We see through a glass darkly, and know only in part; but we see

and know quite enough to make us perfectly certain that the record of Jesus Christ, handed down to us in the Bible, is a true record; and to publish that record, and to insist on its being heard, not to answer all possible objections against it, is the work to which we have been sent forth.

(*d.*) And this leads to another suggestion. Be very candid in your arguments. When you feel a difficulty that has been urged, to be a real difficulty, honestly admit it. A disingenuous argument—a straining of facts to suit your wishes—is sure to do harm. The sympathy produced by your admitting that you do not see your way through some difficulty—the feeling of confidence in your truthfulness of mind as well as of word—will be of infinitely more service than any forced solution of it, however ingenious. And if you feel the firm foundation of positive evidence under your feet, you will not be afraid of such admissions.

(*e.*) Dwell very much on the *ethical* argument for our religion—its moral beauty—its purity—its adaptation to the soul's needs—the plainly improving effect it has upon those who receive it—the marvellous elevation and spirituality of tone pervading its books, written in such dark ages, and by men so unlettered often, so unlikely ever, from their associ-

ations and education, to rise to such sublime heights. This argument is always telling. It has been constantly felt as a difficulty hard to be got over by those who have wilfully set themselves to break down the props of our religion. It has been clung to as a last support—a support that has not given way—by those who have felt, or fancied they felt, every other evidence failing beneath them. Many a man who has shut up volumes of “apologies,” wearied and unsatisfied, has turned to a chapter in St. John’s Gospel, or an Epistle of St. Paul, and has felt a conviction stealing over his soul—a conviction stronger than any logic could produce—forcing him to join in the confession of the Samaritans—“Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

(*f.*) Connected with the preceding suggestion, my concluding recommendation would be this—always urge upon the sufferer from scepticism the necessity of prayer, study of the Scriptures, and holiness of life, in order to see his way clearly through his difficulties. Beg him to *try* to trust in God, and to beseech Him to guide him in his perplexities. Beg him to read his Bible much, in the attitude, not of a critic, but of a learner. Often his doubts will arrest Scripture words at the outposts



of his understanding, and prevent them reaching his soul; entreat of him, therefore, to have special seasons for "heart-reading," not head-reading—seasons in which, with all the energy of the will, he is to drive away intruding doubts, or remand them for another time, and let his soul be simply receptive of the Bible's teaching.

Above all things, strive to lead him, even amidst his intellectual perplexities, to a personal clinging to the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. Pray for him, pray with him for this. If once he could be got to look to that Saviour with the gaze of personal faith, however feeble, crying out, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief," his doubts would gradually flee away one by one, like foul night-birds before the dawn of the morning.

If already he has this personal faith, and if nevertheless a morbid disposition of mind clouds over the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and so allows some of the intellectual doubts to hang around him and persecute him still, recommend him (as in the case of religious sadness above) active exertion in the Lord's work. Such doubts often, after they have been fairly looked in the face, and proved to have no real force, take the form of a chronic disease, and come back and back again to the mind with their painful whispers. Work is the best cure for this ailment. When the hands are idle in the Lord's

service, the soul grows unhealthy. Busy the hands; let them be diligently occupied in earnest work, and health and quiet trust will come back to the soul again. Steady perseverance in ordinary daily duties will supply much of this needful work: the watchful pastor will try to find a special sphere of outward activity for the harassed child of God, and so help him better than by all his arguments.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### VISITING.

THE objects the minister has before him in house-to-house visiting are many. He wants to know his people well, to become familiar with their modes of thought and expression, to make them feel that he is their friend, and to win their confidence and love. He wants really to *act* as their friend, to enter into their interests, to rejoice with those that rejoice, to weep with those that weep, and to give them in their difficulties such advice and help as he is able to offer. He wants to keep up a close connection between them and the Church organisation of the parish, to make them feel that they are watched over and cared for by its pastor, and to stir them up to a diligent use of its means of grace. But chiefly he wants to seek opportunities for preaching to them "Jesus;" he wants pointedly and directly to speak to them of their souls' eternal interests and their lives' solemn duties. Those who neglect his public ministrations he wants to seek for wherever he can find them; and in the house, in the workshop, in

the barn, or in the field, to seize hold of and try to save.

The Lord Jesus, when He was upon earth, “went about *doing good*.” This is the ideal that the pastor should set before him in his visitation. He goes about, through street and through lane, over heath and mountain and moor; now in a luxurious drawing-room, amidst the elegant and refined; now in a smoky hovel, amidst the ragged and poverty-stricken; now in the tradesman’s dingy back parlour; now by the farmer’s blazing fire; now up the creaking stair to the squalid garret; now over the dreary bog to the squatter’s turf-built den—but everywhere his object is the same: like his Master, to do good. The good is of different kinds, according to the circumstances of those he visits. Both body and soul our Saviour cared for, and so must His minister. Often the bodily wants of the neglected poor have to be looked after, their miseries brought under the notice of those who are able to relieve them, and means of various kinds devised to better their position. Often the sorrowing have to be comforted, and the perplexed about earthly troubles to be advised and sympathised with. But always the spiritual welfare, both of rich and poor, has to be attended to, and every effort made to do good to their souls, which love can suggest, which tact can approve, and boldness carry out. Going about, then, like Jesus, doing good—

this is the noble and spirit-stirring motto which should animate the pastor in his long, and often fatiguing, rounds through his parish.

It is not uncommon to hear visiting depreciated as a direct means of grace, and spoken of as chiefly important on account of its indirect usefulness. I would strongly recommend my brethren not to allow any such idea to dwell in their minds as they visit. If, as you go from house to house, you let the whisper rise up within you, "I have not, indeed, said much that is profitable in these families, but I have, at all events, paid them their visits, and this will, of itself, do good," the ever-ready temptation to shrink from hard work will soon lay hold on you, and turn your visiting into the formalism of perfunctory routine. It is nothing to you whether other means of grace are more or less profitable than this one. Your business, while visiting, is to exert every energy of your mind to make the instrument you are now using as powerful as possible. And certainly, without drawing useless comparisons with other instrumentalities, it is hard to exaggerate the blessed influence exercised by a loving pastor's frequent and affectionate visits to his people. The people themselves value them highly. They love to see their minister among them, and to hear his voice speaking by their firesides; and seldom does it happen that, even if he has to rebuke as well as to exhort, it is

not kindly taken, as he sits under their own roof as a friend. Among those whom the pastor will have as his crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord, who can tell how large a proportion may be those whose hearts were first impressed by words spoken amidst the familiar sights and sounds of their cottage homes.

If visits are to be made really profitable, they must be carried on both with thoughtfulness and prayer. Before the pastor enters a house he ought carefully to consider the circumstances of the family. He ought to recall to his mind all that he knows about them—what character they bear, whether they are involved in any quarrels with their neighbours, whether he has reason to hope that any, or all of them, are under the influence of religion, whether there has been any sickness or sorrow among them, whether any of them have been irregular in attending the means of grace, &c. It is better to think of these things beforehand than to leave them to be suggested by chance during the visit, or go away without saying anything on the subjects most needful to be spoken of. Something of the line of conversation most useful to be followed may also be thought of, connected with some of the abovementioned circumstances; and thus the difficulty of bringing in religious conversation well, and the desultoriness and vagueness in that conversation, so often felt in visi

ing, may be very much obviated. Great care, however, must be taken not to let any previous consideration shackle the freedom of intercourse during the visit. It would be better to go without thought at all than to be so eager to drag in what has been prepared as not to be able fully to enter into the subjects of interest occupying the minds of the people. The preparation should be of a very flexible nature—sufficiently definite to enable the pastor to speak as one who has something useful he wants to say, not merely as one who wants to say something useful, at the same time not so prominently fixed in the mind as to refuse to be compressed, altered, or set aside altogether, according as the circumstances of the visit seem to make it desirable.

Earnest prayer should also be breathed up by the minister, while he is on his way to the house, for the Holy Spirit to guide him in his speaking and to open the hearts of the listeners to his words. After he leaves the house another prayer should follow for God's increase to be given to his planting or watering. If the work of visiting is thus begun, continued, and ended in God, who can doubt but that His blessing will richly accompany it?

The practical difficulties met with in visiting are very various. Sometimes the people are reserved, shy, or stupid, and cannot be induced to speak except in dreary monosyllabic answers to questions asked.

Every kind of effort must be made to break this chilling silence. Every topic that can be thought of as likely to awaken the interest and draw out the sympathies of these people must be tried—their children, their farms, their business: anything to shake them from their dull apathy, and bring them into some living relationship with their pastor. If all these means fail, and all his arts meet only the stolid stare, and the short, sullen answer, he must be satisfied with speaking himself as strongly as he can, and having delivered his message, he must go on his way, believing that God can, if He pleases, make His Word sink down into those apparently lethargic hearts, even though they give no outward sign of having felt its power.

Sometimes, on the other hand, the people are so garrulous that it is hard for the minister to speak at all. They have so much to say about their earthly affairs—they are so eager to speak about their real or supposed grievances—they have such interminable stories to tell, that it seems almost impossible to get a hearing for religious subjects. Loving patience, accompanied by determination, is here required. It may seem to the pastor as if he were wasting his time listening to all this talk, so foreign to the business of his office. But he must “not count the hours lost that are spent in cementing affection.” If it relieves the poor people’s minds



to speak to him, if his listening patiently, and with sympathy gives them greater confidence in his regard for them, his time is better employed than in reading volumes of divinity. Besides, he is not to go among his people as a mere machine for preaching and exhorting. He is to go among them as a fellow-man, loving them as men and women, taking an interest in all that interests them, and listening to their tales of suffering, anxiety, sorrow, joy, hope, and fear, not only as a matter of duty and a means to a further end, but from actually felt human sympathy.

A very strong determination to deliver his spiritual message must, however, underlie all this loving patience. He must have a firm resolution present with him through all he hears, that he will not go from the house without leaving a blessing behind. When he is almost ready to despair, and give up the attempt to do any good there as hopeless, this resolution will make a whisper sound in his heart—"Do not go without making one effort more. Rouse yourself; shake off timidity and false shame, and, cost what it may, speak a few words to these people's souls, so that they *must* hear them." Sometimes when a long visit has passed with but little to encourage the minister, he can, when rising up to leave, remind the people that they have just had a message from their Lord—that it is as His ambassador he

has come to them, in God's name, to waken them and warn them—to tell them of their Saviour's love, and urge them onward in His service. A few such earnest words before taking leave may make a deep impression, even where it has been impossible to carry on much spiritual conversation during the visit.

Another difficulty in the way of making parochial visits spiritually profitable, is that they come as a parenthesis (so to speak) in the midst of the hurry of business. Before the pastor's arrival, the people have been busy with the various occupations of the household, the shop, or the farm-yard ; immediately after his departure, they will be hard at work among them again. Now, when they attend the regular means of grace, they go with a religious object consciously before their minds ; there is time for preparation—for having the spirit attuned to the solemn business about to be engaged in ; but here there is nothing of the kind, the pastor's visit is a sudden interruption in their work. He is conscious of this himself. He feels it as a restraint upon his conversation. He is partly afraid of intruding on their time, partly also of the inappropriateness of religious words amidst all this earthly bustle.

It is well for him, however, to remember that he is looked upon as God's minister, that he is expected to speak on spiritual subjects, and that his very

appearance in the house is a kind of preparation for the serious words he has to say. And counterbalancing the disadvantage of the distractions of mind both before and after, and even during his visit, there is the advantage of having religious words and religious thoughts mingled with the common occupations of life. There is a perpetual tendency among all, but specially among the poor, to look upon religion as a thing only for stated occasions—for Sundays and for prayer-time. Very useful is it, therefore, to have heavenly thoughts brought home to them amidst the routine of daily work; and even though the pastor's sentences may be often interrupted by the lifting off of boiling pots and kettles, the stilling of wailing babies, the incursions of fowls and four-footed animals, the bargaining with grumbling customers, and all the petty details of poor people's household business; still these very broken sentences teach a most important lesson, by helping them to feel that the service of God is intimately connected with the doing of their duty in that state of life unto which He has been pleased to call them.

Some clergymen make it a point of conscience always to read the Scriptures and pray when they visit. I do not think it adds to the usefulness of visiting to do this as a rule. It changes the proper nature of a pastoral visit. It makes it too much of

a regular act of worship, instead of an opportunity for friendly religious intercourse. The more free and natural the visit is—the more completely it leaves the people unconstrained, at their ease, and ready to speak just as they feel, the better does it answer its purpose. I should be sorry to criticise the practice of many pious and experienced ministers; but on the whole it seems to me best to have no fixed rule or system in the matter. When interesting subjects, or difficult questions arise in the course of conversation, then let the Bible be opened and its teaching pointed out. When special circumstances—sorrows, joys, or anxieties—have brought the people's minds into such a state, that prayer would be felt as a comfort; or when something that has been said seems to have peculiarly touched and softened their hearts, then let there be prayer. But let there be no unvarying practice, for fear of introducing an element of stiffness or form into pastoral visitation.

I trust that it is almost needless to remark, that constant consideration and courtesy must be observed in visiting the very lowest parishioners. The manner towards them must never be lofty or dictatorial, but brotherly and respectful. Great care must be taken not to hurt their feelings. Rebukes must not be administered in the presence of strangers. Parents must not be reproved before their children.

Nothing must be said to lower the people's self-respect. Advice must be given with such delicacy and thoughtful reference to circumstances, as to impress and convince without wounding.

Most of what has been said about visiting thus far, applies chiefly to the visiting of the lower and middle classes. In visiting the upper classes, there are not the same difficulties exactly, but there are others as great and sometimes greater. In the rich man's house you have not as much power of leading the conversation into the direction you wish, as in the poor man's. The artificial barriers of polite society make it often difficult to speak directly home to the conscience. The young minister is apt to feel some degree of bashfulness with those who are his equals or superiors in rank and education; the fear of their criticism makes him self-conscious, and so cramps him in all he says.

There is nothing for overcoming these difficulties but the exercise of the qualities spoken of before—love, tact, and boldness. Into the house of the peer and the squire, as well as into that of the peasant and the tradesman, the pastor must go with a longing desire to save souls, with a delicate consideration for the feelings of others, and, at the same time, with an unflinching determination to act as God's minister.

The two-fold relationship in which the pastor stands towards his parishioners of the upper classes,

as their friend in social intercourse, and at the same time the watchman who must give an account of their souls, has been felt by many as a difficulty. I do not think it ought to be felt as such. On the contrary, the personal intimacy and freedom of intercourse ought, I think, to be looked upon as a great help. If you are conscious of being, amidst many failings, a true minister of God, desiring above all things to do His work, you need not be afraid that familiarity will breed contempt. The warmer the friendship that exists between you and your people, the stronger ought to be your influence over them. It is a sign either of unreality or very great weakness of character, if you require a veil of mystery and distant reserve to be thrown over you, in order to make your teaching effective. And do not think it necessary to assume a grave or magisterial air in your social intercourse with the gentry of your parish. Be always perfectly natural. Let your manner be serious when you feel serious, cheerful when you feel cheerful. *Be* God's minister in the earnestness of your purpose and the self-devotion of your life, and then you need not try, by any affectation of manner, to make yourself appear such.

At the same time, though there should be no mannerism of any kind—no putting on of solemn looks nor forced checking of natural vivacity—there is need of a peculiar kind of caution in the pastor's

intercourse with the upper classes. He is not to be austere, but he must be circumspect. He must beware of letting his time be frittered away in visits of mere ceremony or common conversation. He must beware of letting himself be drawn in as a partizan in any clique or coterie. He must be very much on his guard, also, against devoting an undue proportion of his time and attention to the interesting and pleasing members of his flock. It is more agreeable to the natural man to act as spiritual guide to some fair young creature, whose pure and holy feelings seem to beam out through her earnest eyes, than to minister to dull and common-place elderly men and women ; and yet these latter may often be in more need of the pastor's guidance than the former. Their souls are as precious in God's sight as hers, and most guilty would the minister be if, in order to indulge his taste and sentiment, he were to neglect those who want him, much for the sake of one who wants him little. He must, therefore, "do nothing by partiality," but conscientiously watch for every soul in his parish as one for whom he must give account.

In visiting at the houses of the upper classes, the servants should not be neglected. They should be specially inquired for, and as much care taken to do good to them as to their employers. By occasionally asking to see them separately, inquiring

into their spiritual state, praying with them, lending them books, and showing a kindly interest in their welfare, they can be very much cheered in their too often thankless toil, and helped and encouraged in their following of Him who was among us "as one that serveth."

Attendance upon the sick of every class forms a most important part of the pastor's visiting work. I need not repeat what every minister must feel, as to the preciousness of the opportunity for spiritual impressions afforded by the sick bed. Many whom, in health, the pastor can scarcely see at all, or can only see in hurried and unsatisfactory interviews, are here within his daily reach, for weeks. Many others, who are generally utterly indifferent to religion, are here eager for the minister's visit. The busy are here at leisure, the cold and hard are, to a certain degree, softened, the apathetic somewhat roused—all feel themselves under a solemnising influence.

In no part of the pastor's work, perhaps, are all the tenderness of his heart and all the wisdom of his intellect so much called forth as in his dealing with these suffering members of his flock. His treatment of them must, of course, vary much according to their different conditions, both spiritual and bodily. Some of those whom he is called to attend are already believers in the Lord Jesus. His work with these is generally very happy. He has to cheer and



comfort and encourage them. He has to bring before them, in all their varying and beautiful aspects, the Lord's promises to His people—His assurances of ineffable love towards them and full sympathy with them—His declarations of the lofty place occupied even now by those who are united with Christ. He has to point out to them the uses of affliction, to show them how they can glorify their dear Lord even on the bed of pain, to make them see what work He has appointed them to do for Him while they are in langour and suffering. Patience, submission, gratitude, love, trust, and hope—these feelings he has to help them to call forth and exercise. This is a very sweet employment for one who feels himself to be their brother in Christ, ministering to those who shall be heirs of salvation : it is angelic work. It is a joy and privilege to be allowed to be busy in it. How delightful it is to the pastor to see the gleam of gladness that brightens the pale face, and the light that kindles in the sunken eye, as he, God's messenger of comfort and love, approaches the bed-side. And every real pastor has this happiness often. For, though in the pulpit he may not be gifted with fervent utterance, to thrill and delight the souls of his listeners, yet in the sick-room the truth that he feels deeply in his own heart, expressed ever so simply, and the love that he cherishes for his suffering brother or sister, will make his words sound like

heavenly music, and his visits be welcomed as dear  
“times of refreshing” in the patient’s weary day.

“The world’s a room of sickness, where each heart  
Knows his own anguish and unrest,  
The truest wisdom there and noblest art  
Is his who skills of comfort best;  
Whom by the softest step and gentlest tone  
Enfeebled spirits own,  
And love to raise the languid eye,  
When like an angel’s wing they feel him fleeting by.”

In his anxiety to comfort the suffering servants of the Lord, however, the pastor must not forget that sickness is meant to be a chastisement to humble and discipline, as well as a trial to be borne with patience. He must, therefore, help the invalid to use it as such. Self-examination—deeper self-abasement—close thoughtfulness as to faults that might be corrected, and duties that might be more carefully performed—solemn reviewing of daily practical life, accompanied by prayerful resolutions as to more complete self-devotion; these sick-bed duties he ought to press upon the sick man, according as he has strength to bear them. Besides this general line of dealing with the Lord’s people, there will often be peculiarities in individual cases requiring special treatment—doubts and perplexities to be cleared up, ignorance to be enlightened, excitement to be calmed down, despondency to be corrected, &c. The able minister of the New Testament will have

his mind so stored with Scripture truth, that he will be ready to meet each of these wants, according as he perceives them, by appropriate passages from the Bible. It is well, in the course of daily reading, often to note down verses or chapters which seem suitable to the kinds of cases most frequently met with on the sick bed.

But often, alas! the pastor's attendance upon the sick has in it much more of pain and anxiety than of pleasure. The patient's heart is not yet converted to God. He is dead, and apathetic, or self-righteous, or undecided. Much of what has been said on the subject of personal intercourse is applicable here, and need not now be repeated. The tearing away of the veils of self-deceit—the pressing upon the conscience the awful realities of death, judgment, heaven, and hell—the setting before the man's eyes, in all its fulness, the pardon for his sins in Christ, and the tenderness and long-suffering compassion of his crucified Saviour—such is the work for the pastor at this critical juncture. And oh, how intensely should he labour in it! Perhaps the sick man is never to rise off that bed. This may be his last opportunity. Eternal life and eternal death may be hanging in the balance during these few concluding days of his mis-spent life. Sad and anxious as the pastor may feel about him, he must never give up hope—never set a limit to the mercy of God—never cease in his efforts

to bring him to Jesus. Or perhaps he is destined to go forth again to the business of life, and this sickness is the last means used by the Lord to waken and change his heart before the final call. Who can measure the responsibility of the minister who has been appointed to guide the soul in this awful crisis of its life? Truly there is need of very fervent prayer that he may be taught how to bring home God's saving truth to that blunted heart, and rescue that poor perishing soul as a brand from the burning.

And not only must the pastor's treatment vary according to the different spiritual conditions of his patients, but the different natures of their bodily diseases must have an influence upon it also. Sometimes there is a long and lingering illness. Here a regular course of teaching may be carried on. The Lord is giving an opportunity for the formation or permanent strengthening of the whole spiritual character; the minister must spare no pains to use it skilfully. In such a case it is well to arrange the subject of reading and conversation in the successive visits on a systematic plan. Much of the force of regular attendance upon the sick is lost, if the teaching in each visit is isolated, desultory, or merely a repetition of what has been gone over in the last. Every day there should be some one definite subject brought before the patient's mind—

something clear and distinct, which he can think of after the pastor is gone. And these separate and distinct lessons should be, if possible, connected one with another, that thus the soul may be led forward by gradually progressive steps. One Scriptural subject naturally leads to another, so that there is not much practical difficulty in linking together the teaching of successive visits. It only requires a little forethought; and the additional interest thereby given to the visits, and the more solid profit derived from them, amply repay any additional trouble it may cost. Chastisement, penitence, faith, pardon, gratitude, love, hope, joy—how readily do such subjects as these, for instance, range themselves into a connected order!—how many beautiful passages might be grouped round each of them—how much profitable conversation would be called forth by each coming in its turn.

But sometimes the sickness is violent and painful. The patient cannot bear much conversation; he cannot answer questions; he cannot follow any lengthened train of thought. Short, pointed, and plain must then be the pastor's sentences. He cannot say much, so he must say it strongly and clearly. Sometimes a few striking verses of Scripture, distinctly repeated, is all that can be borne. Sometimes a simple declaration of the free pardon that is in Christ Jesus. Sometimes a firm and

quietly reiterated assurance of the Saviour's love and the Saviour's presence.

Great consideration should always be given to the bodily state. If the patient is weak, he must not be fatigued or excited. Quietness and repose are often absolutely essential for a sick man's recovery; an injudicious clerical visit, in which his feelings are agitated and his attention strained, may seriously endanger his life.

The tone of voice in a sick room should be clear and distinct, but never loud. In many complaints—especially those which are attended with fever—the hearing is a good deal affected. It is very trying to the sick man not to hear exactly what is said to him. Distinct and deliberate articulation is what he can hear best. Loud speaking, besides jarring on the nerves, is not heard as easily.

Each visit should, if possible, be concluded by prayer. The prayer should be subject to the same variations as the conversation—expressing what the pastor feels to be the patient's chief wants, and those also which he feels most deeply himself—varying in length according to the state of his body. The prayer is very important, both as breathing up to the throne of grace your desires for the sick man, and also as leading and helping him to express his own. The prayers in our service for the "Visitation of the Sick" are beautiful models of simple and

fervent prayers suitable for the sick chamber. It is often well to ask the sick person whether there is any subject on which he would specially wish to have prayer offered up; at other times to suggest some important topic, and ask him whether he would wish to join in bringing it before God: prayer is thus felt to be more really *united* prayer—the agreeing of two or three as touching what they shall ask.

In praying with the *poor*, it is better that each petition should be offered up rather slowly, with a pause between it and the next, so that the uneducated mind may have time to feel its meaning, and that thus the heart may be able thoroughly to go along with it. With educated people this caution is unnecessary, and the most natural way of pouring out the desires is the best.

If the sick man recovers from his illness, the pastor's care of him should not cease with the sickness. After bodily recovery is a very critical time with the soul. Deep impressions may have been made, and earnest resolutions formed, during pain and danger; but now there is a tendency to reaction. The mind is apt to spring back from its state of spiritual tension. Old habits, both of feeling and acting, try hard to regain their sway; and there is a danger of the soul, which had been bowed like a bulrush while the storm of suffering swept over it, rising up again to its accustomed posture as soon as it is past. Very

important, then, is it for the pastor to follow up with the convalescent the work which was begun with the invalid. For a good while after he has returned to his usual avocations the minister's eye should be specially fixed on him. Visits should be paid to him ; serious questions asked ; he should be reminded of what he felt and resolved when on his sick-bed ; solemnly warned if he seems relapsing into coldness, lovingly encouraged and cheered forward if he seems steadfastly persevering in his resolutions.

But often sickness ends in death. When the pastor has watched the sufferer through the closing scenes of his life—when he has attended him through the different stages of his disease, dealing closely and vigorously with his soul at the beginning, when he was able to bear it ; not soothing him with lulling opiates, but bringing God's truth, in all its force, to bear on his conscience ; supporting and cheering him and helping him to lean firmly on his Saviour, as his body grew gradually weaker ; making the sweet sounds of that Saviour's promises ring in his ear, as all earthly prospects were fading away ; whispering to him the dear name of Jesus as his eyes were closing in death ;—when thus the pastor has tended his parishioner till the dying hour, and has spoken the words of hope and trust over his grave, his earthly relationship with him ceases. He can only try to comfort the sorrowing friends he has left behind,



and, by prayer, sympathy, and pointing heavenwards, strive to lighten their burden of grief. His earthly relationship with that member of his flock is over; but how solemn are the thoughts that should fill his heart as he turns away from his grave. What a serious self-examination should he carry on, as he thinks of him who has now left this world of probation, and is face to face with the realities of eternity! "Did I do my duty by him while he lived? Did I try to win him to Christ while he was in health? Did indolence or false shame prevent me from speaking my message to him directly and effectively? Did I deal faithfully with him during his sickness? Did I make sure that he was resting on the only true foundation? Did I set forth Jesus Christ and Him crucified plainly before his eyes? Did I treat him with the love and affection and care which the minister of Jesus is bound to show to the weak and suffering ones of his Master's flock?" As the pastor asks himself such questions, many sad self-reproaches will, doubtless, pass through his heart. But, casting the burden of his omissions and his failures on that Saviour who can be touched with the feeling of his infirmities, he turns again to his work, feeling its reality more deeply, and determined to labour in it more watchfully than ever. And if he has grounds for believing that that departed sufferer was indeed one of the Lord's redeemed servants, as he thinks

over his words of faith and hope, and remembers his submissive patience, he looks forward with a deep, although chastened, gladness to the meeting in heaven, when, amidst the shining millions at the Lord's right hand, he shall recognise, and be recognised by that ransomed soul, whose last earthly hours were soothed and brightened by his ministrations.

Besides those who are actually sick, there are generally in every parish a considerable number of aged and infirm people, who are unable to attend the regular means of grace. The pastor is bound to tend these with special care. Their earthly horizon is darkened; the shadows are falling heavily around them. By frequent visits, prayers, and Scripture readings, God's messenger should help them to rejoice in the Lord even in this twilight shade, and should encourage them to look forward, with increasing hope and gladness, to the coming of that glorious morning when the day is to dawn and the shadows are to flee away for ever.

## CHAPTER V.

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### SCHOOLS.

THE Great "Shepherd of the Sheep" is described as "carrying the lambs in his bosom." The pastor, whose longing desire it is to follow in His steps, should devote the most watchful care, the most affectionate attention, to the little ones of his flock. Very dear to his heart should be the children of his parish. He should try, by every means, to win their love, and to gain their confidence. He should make himself be looked on by them as a friend, whose appearance is to be always hailed with delight, and not shrunk from with awe. The feeling towards him should be such, that when he enters a house the little boys and girls, instead of skulking away to hide, should run forward to meet him with gleeful smiles, and cluster around him, vying with each other who should be nearest.

A most precious opportunity to him is the youth of these little ones. He can now establish a hold over their hearts which will grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength. He can mould their

characters and form their opinions, to a degree which, in after life, he could not hope for.

And, through them, he has a powerful means of access to their parents. The interest he takes in the children—the attention he pays them—will form a bond of union between him and the fathers and mothers that may lead to blessed results upon these latter also. At all events, it is a link of sympathy, which draws pastor and people closer together.

The parish school is one important field, in which care over the lambs of the flock is to be exercised. There is too often a tendency in ministers rather to look down upon school-work. It is the drudgery that is to be attended to by the school-master and the junior curate, while the principal clergyman devotes himself to the higher office of tending the souls of grown people; or else it is one very small part of the machinery of the parish, which may be considered well looked after by an occasional visit and a weekly catechising. Sad it is that one of the most mighty levers for influencing human beings should thus be left almost unused.

I am convinced that the pastor, who would leave a lasting impression upon his parish, must devote a very large share of his time and labour to the school-room. He ought to feel his work there to be one of the most essential parts of his duty, and one of the chief sources of his enjoyment.

Gathered together there, are the rising generation of his people, now ready to listen to him continually, now ready to drink in all he says ; in a few years to be dispersed through the parish as grown men and women, too busy to see or hear him often, mixing with all kinds of company, surrounded by all kinds of influences, chiefly dependent for their habitual character on the training they have received at this very time. There they are, in all the softness and yieldingness of childhood,, soon to carry away for life—aye, even for eternity, it may be—the marked impression of their present treatment. Who knows how that impression may affect not only themselves, but generations yet unborn ! Who knows how the diligent pastor's teaching may echo and re-echo long after he has been laid in his grave—how the little ones now before him, when grey-haired men and women, may repeat to their children the very lessons which their “ dear old minister ” taught themselves in days gone by !

There are gathered together also a company of the pastor's special friends—of those whom he sees most often, with whom he is most familiar, and to whom his presence gives the liveliest pleasure. From the infants, with their bright eyes and soft faces, to the big boys, with their rough heartiness and strong feelings under awkward manners ; from the shy little girls, with roguish glances, to the demure maidens,

whose countenances are softening and deepening with the dawn of womanhood—all are the pastor's friends. And they know it as well as he does. They feel that he likes to be amongst them ; and the smile that lights up their faces as he enters the room—more unmistakable welcome than the loudest applause—shows how warmly his pleasure in their society is reciprocated. And many of his happiest hours are spent among these friends. As he sits with the various classes, opening the treasures of God's Word to them, drawing out their own understandings, interested himself, and keenly awakening their interest ; with the elder ones, rather “ taking sweet counsel together ” than formally teaching—he feels that it is pleasant, as well as good, for him to be there.

The pastor's work in his school divides itself into two branches—general supervision, and direct teaching.

Though his duties are too manifold to allow him to spend any very large portion of his time daily in the school, yet it should be thoroughly pervaded by his influence. One way of producing this result is through close intercourse with the schoolmaster. If at all possible, the pastor should make a friend of his teacher. There are cases, certainly, where an inefficient master has been appointed in past times, who has no sympathy with the minister's earnest views

about education, and looks upon his efforts with jealousy. And it is not always either just or practicable to dismiss such a man summarily from his old post. Here this channel of influence is almost closed. Patience and love may, perhaps, in the long run, prove it not to be as completely so as seemed at first. But, generally speaking, especially with the rising generation of teachers, sent out by our training schools, there will be no such difficulty. The master will, to a certain degree, at least, respond to the friendly advances of his minister. And very affectionately should the minister strive to make him feel as a fellow-labourer with himself in the Lord. First, and chiefly, he should bend his energies to see that he is, in reality, a servant of God, and thoroughly in earnest in his own spiritual life. Then he should endeavour continually to kindle in his heart a holy enthusiasm for his work. He should speak to him, pray with him, lend him books, sympathise with him, and encourage him in every way. The more he can see of his schoolmaster, and the more familiar and unreserved intercourse he can hold with him, the better. He should draw him on to speak of the individual children taught—of their characters—their faults—his difficulties with them—his hopes and fears about them. The master is thus brought to entertain higher views of his work—to look upon it less as a means of earning money, more as a service

for God's glory. He feels that his efforts are sympathised with and appreciated ; this urges him to greater activity. His own heart becomes more enlightened from frequent spiritual intercourse with God's minister. He becomes more strictly conscientious—more laboriously diligent in his secular teaching, and, at the same time, he grows more anxious about the eternal interests of his pupils, more watchful over the development of their characters, more careful to seize every opportunity of training their hearts as well as teaching their minds.

Truly each hour that the pastor spends in spiritual communion with his schoolmaster is employed in sowing seed that, with God's blessing, will bear a hundred-fold.

But, besides the advantage thus resulting to the master's teaching, the minister himself derives from this intercourse much important knowledge about the children. The schoolmaster has better opportunities for becoming thoroughly acquainted with their characters than he has. In the clergyman's presence they do not appear altogether in their natural colours ; they are anxious to appear to advantage before him. Without conscious hypocrisy, the desire to please the person they especially respect and love, and whom they feel to have a kind of nameless authority over them, has a strong influence on their manners. On this account, he is liable, if he trusts to his own



observation only, to be mistaken in his estimate of many of the children's characters, and so to be mistaken in his way of treating them.

But the master is with the children many hours every day. He sees them, not only when they are in good humour over a pleasant Scripture lesson, or pleased at the variety of being taught some of their other lessons by a clergyman, but all through the routine of their daily work. He sees them in success and in failure, under approbation and under disgrace, in high spirits and low spirits, in rivalry with one another, at play together : in short, under all the circumstances that are best calculated to draw out the peculiarities of each child's disposition. Thus he has the best opportunities of knowing his pupils as they really are. Of this knowledge the minister, if he is wise, will avail himself. He will ask the master's opinion about each child, inquire as to the grounds on which it is formed, consult as to the best means of treating that child, compare his own idea of him with the teacher's, and modify it according as he sees this new evidence requires.

A more accurate knowledge of the individual children is thus gained, besides additional insight into human nature in general, and useful lessons as to how far his own impressions are to be trusted in judging of character.

If possible, let the minister open his school himself

daily, with a brief prayer and hymn. Of course this can only be done when his house is close to the school. But where it is practicable, it has a powerful effect in connecting the school with the pastor in the minds both of parents and children. And that daily prayer, offered up by him along with "the lambs of the flock," in their behalf, must it not draw down blessing on the work of their education? It takes up time certainly, and breaks in somewhat on the morning's quiet study to have to be thus every day in the school at nine or ten o'clock; but does not the pastor's time belong to his God and his people, not to himself? Must not his personal convenience give way to his work, instead of his work to his convenience? And if he feels, as he ought, the intense importance of securing a firm hold over the children's hearts, and a strong influence over their minds, that daily meeting with them in the school-room will seem too precious an opportunity to be sacrificed even to the claims of the study. To return to a metaphor made use of before, now that he has an occasion for wielding his sword with special effect, he will not be content to stay at home sharpening it.

Frequent occasional visits, also, are useful for general supervision. Not only at his own stated hour, but at all kinds of unexpected times, it is well for the pastor to appear in his school. Master and children

are thus kept more on the alert; discipline is more strictly carried on, and the natural tendency in both to grow languid and careless is checked. Not that the minister should ever seem to take upon him the office of a spy. He should not appear anxious to "catch" his school off its guard. Many little faults that he observes, on a sudden entrance, he had better take no notice of. Anything that interferes with cordial confidence between himself, the master, and the children, mars his usefulness. Continual fault-finding is not suited to the holiness of his office and the nature of his message. In his visits, therefore, he must be always, as far as possible, genial and pleasant in manner. It is his frequent presence, and not the discoveries he makes, that keeps up the life of the school. Towards the master, especially, his bearing should always be friendly, sympathising, and respectful. If he finds fault with the teacher, or seems dissatisfied with him, in the presence of the pupils, more injury is done, by their loss of respect for their master, than any good the criticism produces can make up for. The children should feel, if possible, that their minister and teacher go hand-in-hand together in educating them. Sometimes, alas! the master, by his underhand ways—by his hypocritical eye-service, understood only too well by his pupils—counteracts all efforts to produce this feeling; but, as far as in him lies, the minister should endeavour

to speak and act so that such a state of feeling should exist.

But, though he must thus be cautious not to let his superintendence have the appearance of espionage, and very careful never to diminish the respect in which the master is held by the pupils, it is the pastor's duty to see that the work of the school is done effectually. If he sees signs of neglect on the teacher's part, he can either speak to him about it in a kind spirit in private; or else, if he thinks it more expedient, so set about remedying the neglect himself, that the teacher may perceive he has noticed it. When he sees in any of the children signs of carelessness, idleness, and insubordination, or has these faults brought before him by the master, he must rebuke the offender, gravely and lovingly always, but if occasion require, severely, and even sternly.

The pastor ought to take a lively interest in the progress of the pupils in secular learning as well as spiritual. He must try to make his school a thoroughly good school. Copies must often be examined by him, sums looked over, lessons heard. Sometimes if he comes in while a class is being taught by the master, it is well for him to stand by and listen to the answering; sometimes to teach it himself. Occasionally a regular examination of each class in the various branches of its learning is useful. Simple lectures on interesting subjects connected

with their studies might, with advantage, be given to the children in the schoolroom—graphic descriptions of the countries they learn about in their geography lessons—stirring narratives, taken from the history of these countries—interesting details about the habits of animals, or about natural phenomena which are not familiar to them, such as icebergs, glaciers, volcanoes, earthquakes, &c. Such little lectures would cost an educated man scarcely any trouble in preparing, and would give vivid pleasure to the children, as well as help to expand their minds. School-feasts, too, every now and then, accompanied by games, and various devices to make the children happy, draw closer the bonds of union between them and their pastor, and throw a pleasant light over his connection with their studies.

By these and various such-like plans, which the circumstances of the parish will suggest to each person, the pastor can keep the school thoroughly under his influence in all its parts, can mix himself up with every branch of the children's instruction, and make both them and their parents feel that he is in reality the chief educator of the young of the parish. It is not with the egotistic desire to put himself prominently forward before their minds, that he aims at this: it is in order that the hearts of the rising generation should be closely bound with ties of love and confidence to the minister of the Church:

it is in order that a hold may be established over them, which neither the temptations of after life, nor the attractions of rival sects, will easily loosen : it is in order that their education may be, on the whole, a *good education*—sound, solid, and enlightened.

But there is a deeper work to be done in the school than what is effected by general supervision. Close, direct, continual teaching of divine truth must accompany it—must be to it what the soul is to the body, that which gives it life, warmth, and power.

I have spoken of the minister's opening his school with prayer daily ; this ought to be followed by half an hour's Bible lesson. The importance of the daily teaching of the Word of God by the minister himself can scarcely be overrated. What constitute the solid basis for practical piety, are *habits* of feeling rightly. These produce habits of acting rightly, and it is the habitual that forms the character, not the transient and occasional. Now, habits can only be induced by repetition ; and it is the constant repetition of holy, earnest, heart-stirring lessons, which gives its peculiar strength to daily Bible teaching. As, day after day, such lessons are impressed, and by judicious questioning and affectionate applications made to be understood and appreciated, the moral sense of the children is gradually awakened—brought to assume its proper position as a voice consciously speaking

within them—trained and directed in its feelings—in one word, educated. This process goes on, not occasionally, by violent excitement, but steadily, regularly, daily. Thus, a Scriptural tone of thought becomes habitual. The young minds become accustomed to look upon the great realities of the moral world in the true light in which they are continually brought before them. A sense of the fearfulness of sin, of the blessedness of holiness, of the kindness and love and constant presence of their Saviour, grows with their growth and strengthens with their strength.

We cannot, indeed, educate the heart into real spiritual life. The Holy Ghost Himself alone can bring the soul either of child or man into living union with Christ; but we can do the part allotted to human instrumentality; we can not only instruct the mind and enlighten the conscience, but we can, to a great degree, form the habitual tone of thought, and use the means best calculated to form the habitual tone of feeling also.

Day after day, then, and week after week, line upon line and precept upon precept, should the tender lambs of the fold be fed by their shepherd with the "sincere milk of the Word."

In this morning reading with the minister, the ordinary classification of the school cannot be observed. All who can read the Bible with ease and fluency may be put together; girls and boys may be

united. If the class thus formed be too large to be easily managed, it can be divided into two—a senior and junior division, and taught on alternate mornings.

I mention the morning as the best time for the Bible lesson, both because it is more practicable for the clergyman to attend at that hour without interfering with his other work, and also because the children are then fresh in body and mind, and not jaded after their five or six hours' study. It is very common to keep the Scriptural instruction till the last hour; when the school is in a distant district, this may suit better; but as a general rule, I think the early hour, for the reasons' above given, is much preferable. The chief objection to the early hour is the difficulty of having all the children collected in proper time. There are so often dawdlers in the school, who are generally late in their arrival, that it may seem a pity that the part of the instruction they most often miss should be the most precious part. I have found this disadvantage obviated by giving a ticket every morning to each child that was in his place at the appointed hour—these tickets being understood to have a commercial value, and when amounting to a certain number, to entitle the owner to a reward-book. Simple as this plan is, it is surprising the effect it has in producing punctuality, even in children



of an age and station in which they would hardly be supposed to care for such trifles.

As to the best way of carrying on the Bible instruction, so much has been written in special treatises on teaching, that it is needless to enlarge on it here to any length. The following suggestions, however, may be useful:—

(a.) Try to make the Scripture lesson *pleasant*. Children will not gain much from what they feel to be tiresome. Be lively, genial, and cheerful in your manner while teaching. This is quite compatible with the truest reverence. Life and animation are altogether different from levity. The most reverential treatment of God's Word is that which makes it be understood and loved. A solemn countenance and an awful manner, chilling the hearts of little children, and making them dislike the lesson you give them, is surely a most mistaken way of showing honour to the Bible.

(b.) As a general rule, *prepare* the business yourself before teaching it. Prepare it with a special view to making it plain and profitable to the children. Much desultory and rambling teaching may thus be prevented.

(c.) Teach almost altogether by *questioning*. Let

the minds of your pupils be active, not passive in the acquirement of instruction. Make them express distinctly what they do know; lead them by judicious questions to discover for themselves what they do not know. "Question the knowledge into them, and then question it out of them," is now recognised as the golden rule in teaching. In applying Scripture to the conscience the same rule holds good. Make the children find out the application themselves. Rather help the conscience, by suggestive questions, to feel the moral of its own accord, than force that moral upon it by a lecture.

(*d.*) In teaching any portion of Scripture, your general plan should be something as follows: First—Make the children *interested* in it. Get their imagination or their curiosity to be more or less aroused by it. If it is a narrative you are teaching, try to make them realise the scene. Put all the details of it as vividly before them as possible, so that there may be a distinct picture of it before their minds. If any of the things mentioned are unfamiliar to them—such as ancient implements of warfare, Eastern animals and plants, &c., (and, if they are inland children, ships, anchors, and every thing connected with nautical matters)—describe them accurately, or better still, draw sketches of them on paper, or on the board. It is these minute touches

that give life to the picture, and it is a living picture that you want to present to the imaginations of your pupils. If it is a doctrinal or didactic passage, suggest to them some difficulty about it—some apparent opposition to other passages; set them in some way to think or wonder about it. If you can get them to be struck by a difficulty, a great thing is gained; the passive, matter-of-course way they generally have of reading the Bible is broken through. The mind is set to work upon it. Attention is thoroughly aroused; interest is kindled; and it is to have them thus interested, as the preliminary step to any thing further, that you are first anxious.

Next, make the passage be thoroughly *understood*. Cause the intellects of all to grasp exactly what was meant by the inspired writer. Make the difficult words be explained. Make the connection and sense of the various sentences be brought out. See that the general drift of the whole passage is appreciated. Some things will be explained by the younger children, some by the elder, in some you will have to help them out yourself. But keep them all on the alert, assisting each other, correcting each other, gradually coming all together to a full intellectual understanding of the passage, and of every word in it—as far, at least, as they or you are capable of understanding God's revelations. This intellectual explanation will be your second step.

Then will come the *moral and spiritual application*. Let this be pointed, homely, vigorous, and short. The elder children, indeed, if you see their interest and attention going along with you, you can sometimes lead on further and deeper into spiritual thought than many people suppose. Some of these, who have been for any length of time attending your daily lessons, will be perhaps amongst the most earnest and anxious Christians in your whole parish. God's blessing upon early teaching often makes young minds intensely susceptible to religious impressions. It will be delightful to give to these the food their souls long for; to draw out for them the beauty and glory of the inspired Word: and you know not how much of this higher teaching even the little ones, who you think can hardly understand it, may really be drinking in. But great care must be taken not to weary the many for the sake of the few; on this account brevity in the application is generally necessary; but though brief, the suggestions made may, through the earnestness and love with which they are put, be very telling and heart-reaching. Sometimes, by getting the children themselves to suppose various cases or positions in their actual life, by making them describe the difficulties or temptations or duties that would arise from them, and by bringing them to see how the teaching of the passage before them would apply to such cases, their attention

and interest may be kept up for a longer time than usual on the application. But this is the exception rather than the rule. Vivid descriptions, distinct explanations, and short morals, often repeated, pleasantly and affectionately brought out, form, on the whole, the most effective style of teaching. Of course this threefold plan must not be followed too servilely. There must be constant variety, change, and freshness in teaching. If you love God's truth, and love the children entrusted to you, you will often hit on ways of bringing that truth home to those little ones which no one could have suggested to you. The plan mentioned, however, is good as a general model, to be altered, modified, or laid aside altogether, according to special circumstances.

(*e.*) Do not neglect to teach the Epistles as well as the rest of Scripture. I often notice in schools that, while the Gospels and the Acts, and all the historical parts of the Bible, are read over and over again, the Epistles are quite left out. The reason given is, that they are too hard. This is, in truth, the very reason that they need most to be taught by the minister. The easy parts of Scripture the children can understand for themselves; but those which are most difficult, and most liable to be misunderstood, are just the parts which require most to be explained by a properly-qualified and enlightened

teacher. If this were more done, our young people would be less likely to be carried away by the exaggerated doctrines of Dissenters than they now too often are. As it is, knowing scarcely anything of the Epistles, they go to a "preaching." There they hear a highly-coloured and fanatical version of St. Paul's or St. John's teaching thundered forth on the authority of one or two isolated texts; it seems to break in upon them as a new light; they had never thought of those passages before—hardly knew of their existence; they return home, bringing with them the germs of dissatisfaction with their own Church, and of a feverish religious excitement, from the unhealthy effects of which they may, perhaps, never recover. Now, if they had been taught those Epistles, wisely and correctly, by their own pastor; if the noble spiritual truths they contain had been put before them in all their fulness, guarded from wild exaggerations by critical explanation, and comparison of Scripture with Scripture, much of this danger would have been avoided; the subjects spoken of would not have had the surprise and dazzle of novelty: the texts quoted would have been known and understood—their perversions, therefore, not so readily received.

Besides this defensive reason for studying them, we must remember that some of the richest treasures of God's truth have been revealed to us through the

channel of the Epistles. Why, then, should we keep them hid from our children? If we have felt, understood, and loved them ourselves, we shall easily be able to make them comprehensible and interesting to our pupils. It may require, perhaps, more preparatory study than other teaching, but have we a right to spare ourselves this trouble?

NOTE.—A friend of mine, who has charge of an extensive rural district, in which there are several schools, meets all the teachers for an hour or two every Saturday. The teachers are, for the most part, simple men, of no very high class of attainments. He instructs them carefully in their secular business, bringing them on to higher advancement in learning, and helping them to teach more effectively. He finds great advantage from this plan. It may serve as a hint to those who are similarly situated.

The remarks made in the text on intercourse and sympathy with the schoolmaster, apply, of course, (*mutatis mutandis*,) to the schoolmistress; only, if she be young and unmarried, and the minister the same, the intercourse can hardly be quite so free or frequent. The young minister can scarcely be too circumspect in matters of this kind, lest the silly tongue of gossip should whisper things lowering to the dignity of his office, and detrimental to his usefulness. The purity of an angel is not safe from the breath of scandal, without wise and careful prudence.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### CATECHETICAL CLASSES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

OWING to differences of rank, and various other causes, all the children of the parish are not to be found in the parish school. Separate Bible-classes, therefore, must be formed, in order to embrace all. As far as possible, the distinction between rich and poor ought to be kept out of sight in spiritual things. The wretched tone of feeling which used to box up the squire in his curtained pew, and leave the peasant on his cold bench in the aisle, should be hateful to every clergyman—indeed, to every Christian. Still, a Bible-class for the children who do not attend the school, although it practically becomes a class for the children of the upper orders, is often expedient—sometimes necessary. There is nothing invidious in it. It in no way recognises the earthly distinctions of rank. It simply deals with facts as they are. Many children cannot be taught by their minister in school; he feels he must teach them somewhere, so he invites them to this class. And, as it leads the children of the better educated, who have had higher



intellectual advantages and on the whole have attained to a higher intellectual standard, to be collected into a separate group, it rather facilitates parish teaching in general.

Only let no ground for jealousy be given by drawing any line of demarcation, or making admission any kind of privilege. Let the pastor's language about it be simply this—"I teach most of our children daily in school; I should wish that those whom I cannot see there would come and meet me here."

Besides Scripture teaching, means should be taken to instruct the children, both those who attend school, and those who do not, in the formularies of our Church. If we conscientiously feel that this Church is both sounder in its doctrine and more apostolical in its constitution than any other communion of Christians—if we feel that its past history, its position in this land, its purity of faith, its calm sobriety of tone, the noble beauty of its liturgies, the mighty work for the Lord it has been the means of doing, both at home and abroad—if we feel that all this gives it a peculiar claim on our allegiance, and a strong hold on our affections, we are surely bound to make our children thoroughly acquainted with its doctrines, and interested in its services.

It is not sufficient for this that they should be able to gabble over the words of the catechism, and repeat a few isolated collects. Special systematic teaching

ought to be given on the Church formularies. The younger children ought to be well grounded in the meaning as well as the words of the catechism. Each answer ought to be interestingly analyzed for them, its teaching put in simple words, expanded, illustrated from Scripture, connected with their actual life, and made to be no longer a hackneyed rhyme of mere sounds, but the expression of definite thoughts.

And here it may be useful to observe, that whenever anything—whether catechism, collect, text, or hymn—has to be committed to memory, the usual practice in the matter ought to be reversed. Generally, the words are first learned, and then the meaning explained; whereas invariably the meaning ought first to be made plain, and then, when the words are no longer confusing sounds, but symbols of ideas, they may be learned. Some admirable remarks of Archbishop Whately on teaching the words of the Lord's prayer to very young children may occur to the minds of my readers in connection with this subject.

The elder children, when the catechism is well understood, should be led on to the XXXIX Articles. Much sound knowledge can be imparted, and much interesting spiritual truth unfolded, in studying these Articles, proving their doctrines from Scripture, and discussing some of the chief controversies on which

they treat. It often interests young people to have an Article explained, and its principal points put before them, on one day, and to find out themselves, and bring with them Scripture proofs of those points against the next lesson.

The Liturgy, the Baptismal and Communion Services will also form useful subjects for advanced classes—will ripen them in religious knowledge, help them to use those services more intelligently, and arm them against the attacks they may often hear against the Prayer-book.

It is an evil to multiply classes, or to make the machinery of parochial work more complicated than is necessary; but, if practicable, it is well to have the catechizing class distinct from the Bible classes. Dissenters are often glad to have their children avail themselves of our Scripture teaching, while they would not wish to allow them to be taught the distinctive doctrines of our Church. We must respect the conscientious scruples of the weak brother, and not refuse to give him anything because he will not take all.

In the catechizing class also, held on a fixed day and hour during the week, we may be able to gather together all our children. It may be placed on the same kind of footing as the Sunday-school—common ground on which all ranks unite in learning the truths of their common faith. This class is distin-

guished from the Sunday-school by being altogether taught by the minister or ministers personally. No matter how large it is, two divisions will generally be found sufficient to make it manageable. If there is only one minister, the divisions can come at successive hours. The junior division will probably be very numerous, including many little ones who are not able to join the Bible classes. They may be taught with advantage on what is called the "gallery system," *i. e.*, simultaneous answering from all the children, instead of separate from each.

Very pleasant it is to listen to the busy hum of their little voices repeating the solemn sentences of the Creed or the Lord's prayer, and to watch the gleams of brightness that seem to pass over that flowery parterre of rosy faces, as they are taught to perceive a meaning and a moral in words familiar to them from the cradle.

We now turn to a branch of parochial work which has been so much owned and blessed by the Lord that it requires no words to impress its importance—I mean the Sunday-school. The Sunday-school is one of the few spiritual works in which, until very lately, the co-operation of the laity with the ministry has been cordially recognised and effectually used.

In the Sunday-school, pastor and people stand side

by side as fellow-labourers ; rich and poor sit together as fellow-learners. In the Sunday-school, many who have no leisure during the busy week to attend any means of instruction, use God's rest to learn God's Word.

Happy and useful work in the Lord's service for the earnest-minded among the laity—a closer drawing together of the ties between minister and people—a cordial feeling of brotherhood between the high and low in worldly position—a wide diffusion of the knowledge which makes men wise unto salvation—such are the most marked features of the Sunday-school system.

Not to eulogise Sunday-schools, however, but to give such hints as may help in their management, is my present object. In order to do so, I shall try to describe a model Sunday-school for our "Model Parish." I do not expect, of course, that this model should be exactly copied. In many places it will be much improved upon ; in other places, old established customs, and huffy teachers, make anything but very slow remodelling inexpedient ; other places, again, are so happily and efficiently organised already that they need borrow nothing from ideal patterns. A feature or two, here and there, however, may be copied by some who are establishing a new Sunday-school, or re-organising an old one ; and as every plan here recommended has been tested by experience,

and has been found to work well, I hope that the features so copied may not be without their use.

Our model Sunday-school is divided into not more than five or six classes : there is a certain quantity of business common to all these classes ; there is additional business appointed (according to a graduated scale, suited to the different capacities of the children) to each class separately. The common business generally consists of two or three selected verses of Scripture, to be carefully explained by the teachers on one Sunday, and committed to memory by the children against the next. The importance of this common business will appear by-and-by. The separate business consists of progressive lessons in the Old and New Testament, to be read over at home, (never *read* in school.) The teacher is so to question on these lessons as to ensure their home preparation, as well as to explain them, and make them interesting in the class. All this business is thoughtfully selected and appointed by the superintending minister, not by the individual teacher. This rule is on no account allowed to be broken through.\* Many important reasons have been given for having all the classes taught the same business, expanded or simplified so as to suit their respective capacities. Much can be said also in favour of the older, and more

\* A slip of paper, containing the Lessons for the next Sunday, may be, with advantage, given to each teacher every Sunday.

general system, of different lessons, proportioned to the different ages and attainments of the children. We combine, to a great degree, in our model school, the advantages of both these systems, by the partly common and partly separate lessons appointed.

If the number of attendants require it, each of our classes is divided into two or more divisions, learning exactly the same business, so that they can be examined together, and, in case of absence of teachers, may be thrown into one another without confusion.

Every Sunday the clerical superintendent takes one of the classes, in successive order, combining its several divisions. The business for that day is a repetition of what has been learned since he heard them last. He examines the children, either through all or part of this business, as he sees expedient. The teachers sit by, hear how their pupils answer, notice what part of their teaching has been forgotten, what misunderstood, &c. At the same time, from hearing the questions of an experienced examiner, they receive themselves a useful lesson in the art of teaching. This periodic examination gives wonderful life to the school. Old teachers may, at first, grumble a little at the interruption of their established routine, but, in the long run, both teachers and children like it. It gives a constant zest and interest to their work. Zealous teachers look forward with pleasure to the appreciation of their

efforts they are sure to meet from their minister ; indolent ones are kept from flagging, by fear of his reproachful look if their pupils are manifestly deficient. The children themselves like the little variety, the little bustle and stir of the preparation for repetition ; they are pleased to be taught by their beloved pastor. Without the great awe and anxiety of the annual examination, this periodic foretaste of it stirs them up to diligence, gives them a stimulating motive for careful revision of what they have learned—the idle ones are shamed by dread of exposure, the diligent cheered and encouraged to fresh exertions.

In spite of theoretical objections, rewards have been so universally recognised by the common sense of mankind, as an important element in the management of the young, that we feel at liberty to use them largely in our model Sunday-school. Every Sunday, each child, who has been present in proper time, who has been attentive and well-behaved, and has given evidence of having prepared his lessons carefully beforehand, receives a ticket. The decision whether he is entitled to receive it or not rests absolutely with the teacher, thereby increasing the teacher's authority over his class. When six tickets have been obtained, a larger ticket, or picture-card, is given in place of them. Whoever, at the end of the year, has a certain number of these cards,



receives a premium. A roll-book is carefully kept, in order to rectify mistakes and prevent any temptation to dishonesty. Thus every child, whether its natural endowments be small or great, is able, by diligence and good conduct, to secure a yearly prize.

Besides these, there are also rewards for superior answering. An annual examination is held—looked forward to by the children as a great era in their lives—at which clergymen from neighbouring parishes are invited to assist. They award two or three premiums in each class to the best answerers.

I am aware that very strong objections can be urged against the use of competitive examinations in schools designed to foster spiritual, rather than intellectual, growth. The spirit of rivalry called forth—the conceited elevation caused by success—the disappointment and envy generated by failure—the eager excitement accompanying the whole affair—all this, it is argued, makes a competitive examination an evil in a parish, rather than a good. I admit that there is much force in these objections ; so much so, as to make it a matter of very serious deliberation whether they ought not to be conclusive against the competitive system. But, on the whole, after long practical acquaintance with schools worked both with and without it, I should decidedly recommend such a system of examination for our model school. Most earthly schemes are but a compromise between

advantages and disadvantages, and the balance in this matter seems to me to be considerably in favour of premiums for answering. The stimulus to mental activity—the strong inducement to self-imposed study—the extensive acquaintance with the objective parts of the Bible, at least—the exercise and development of the intellectual powers, produced by the competitive examination, give a life and vigour to the whole school-work which far more than make up for the temptations it carries along with it. And those temptations to triumph in the hour of success, to bitterness in failure, or to over-eagerness about either, do they not arise from dispositions in the human mind, present there equally whether there be examination or not? Even without this, would there not be continual occasions in real life to draw them out? Is not the child who is conceited over his premium, or sullen over the loss of it, conceited or sullen over a hundred other things besides? And may not this success or failure—type of what he must meet continually in the ebb and flow of earthly fortune—when gone through under the eye of a watchful and loving pastor, who sees the danger, and can warn and help against it, may it not become a strengthening discipline, rather than an injurious temptation?

Certainly it has been observed, as a matter of experience, by those who have long had the management of Sunday-schools, carried on with the help of

competitive examinations, that, although at first there used to be painful exhibitions of the evil feelings spoken of, yet, when the children became accustomed to the examinations, and accustomed to win and lose premiums, these feelings have very much diminished and almost disappeared. The trial made manifest the latent evil. Kind and judicious advice was brought to bear upon it when thus discovered. The exercise of resisting it, year after year, gave strength for its overthrow.

One of the great difficulties, in most Sunday-schools is the obtaining a sufficient number of properly-qualified and really earnest teachers. Our model school has an organisation both for supplying teachers and for improving them. The head class is treated as a nursery for teachers. This is a recognised and well-understood thing through the school. The young people, of whom its divisions consist, are trained to look upon themselves as under preparation for teaching. This fact is often impressed upon them, and gives a more solemn tone to the instruction they receive. They alone, of all the scholars, are allowed and invited to attend the teachers' meetings; and whenever a teacher is absent for a Sunday from any of the lower classes, one of the most advanced among the head class pupils is called upon to supply his place temporarily. Thus a superior dignity is given to this head class, which prevents

grown-up young men and women from being ashamed of continuing to attend it; an *esprit de corps* is produced through the whole school, as those who have risen through its classes are seen gradually taking their part in it as teachers; and the pastor has, growing up under his eye, a band of young people with whose characters he is intimately acquainted, educated for teaching, interested in teaching, and ready, when a gap occurs, to fill the vacancy. By these means, after the school has been some time in operation, a permanent supply of efficient teachers is secured.

The continual improvement of teachers is aimed at in the regular carrying on of teachers' meetings. These are held once every month. In some Sunday-schools they are held weekly; but as our model school is supposed to be in a parish where busily-employed people—shopkeepers and their assistants, intelligent mechanics, farmers' sons and daughters, &c.—take part in the work, as well as ladies and gentlemen, once a month is as often as the teachers can spare time to be regularly present.

The objects of these meetings are three:—First, *United prayer*. The minister and the teachers join together in beseeching the Lord to bless their work—to teach their own hearts—to pour out His Spirit upon them abundantly, and make them full of wisdom and holy zeal. They pray, not only for a

blessing upon themselves and their efforts, but also very fervently for a blessing upon the children. They ask God to open the hearts of their pupils—to give them meek and teachable spirits—to make them and keep them His own people for time and for eternity. If any particular child, or particular circumstance, is causing uneasiness to a teacher, that case is brought specially before the Throne of Grace.

Secondly — *Conversation and sympathy.* The teachers are led to look upon themselves as one united band, joined in one great work. A feeling of fellowship is encouraged, by speaking together on subjects of mutual interest. They take sweet counsel together about their common work. Plans are suggested; questions are asked; special circumstances in the different classes are mentioned; advice and sympathy in difficulties are sought for, both from the minister and the fellow-teachers. The minister reminds the teachers of their responsibilities, warns them against “weariness in well-doing,” points out to them the great encouragements they have in their Saviour’s sympathy and the crown of glory in the future, questions them as to their visiting of their pupils during the week—as to the progress made by the classes—as to such special circumstances as he may judge profitable to have spoken of in the meeting; in short, he tries, in every way, to rouse the interest, kindle the zeal, and stimulate the energies

of his teachers. Knowing the perpetual tendency of the human soul to flag in its labour, and fall into a routine way of working, he spares no exertions in the meeting, as well as in private intercourse, to counteract this slackening tendency.

Thirdly—*Preparation of lessons.* The pastor helps the teachers to prepare what they will have to impart to the children. And here comes in the use of that common business learned by all the classes. It supplies a short portion of Scripture for united study at the meeting. In the long run, the meetings would be sure to become desultory and heavy, if there were not something definite to be done at them—something to keep the mind busy, and to bring in change and variety. This object is effected by the ten or twelve verses which have to be taught by all the teachers during the month. They are first broken up into the separate portions for the several Sundays. Each of these, in turn, is taken and made the subject of study and conversation. The pastor tries to draw out the minds of his teachers upon it. He labours to make them thoroughly understand and feel it themselves first. Then he makes them seize upon the chief points in it to be impressed upon the children, leads them on to suggest the principal ideas connected with these points, the illustrations and references bearing upon them, the best ways of putting both their meaning and spiritual lessons

clearly before the children's minds. Thus, one by one, all the portions for the Sundays of the month are gone through. In his periodical examinations, the pastor is careful to see that the special points brought out at the meeting have been made plain to the children. The expectation of this quickens the attention of the teachers to what is said, makes them think of it afterwards, and, if necessary, put down notes of it in writing.

Here it may be said, by the way, that, at the first establishment of teachers' meetings in a parish, it may be useful to give a series of short, practical lectures on Sunday-school teaching. The responsibility of teachers—the motives that should influence them—the dangers and difficulties they are subject to—the importance of preparing what they teach—visiting their pupils at home—praying for them individually—winning their affections—the best methods of imparting knowledge—these, and similar subjects, may be dwelt upon in plain and affectionate words. A strong forward impulse may thus be given, which the regular meetings will afterwards keep up.

One feature more in the organisation of our model school must yet be mentioned. It is a yearly meeting of the children's *parents*. We require their co-operation. We want them to be interested in our work—to be interested in the children's progress—above all, to be interested in the salvation of their

souls. We want them to send their children to us regularly, and to follow up during the week the teaching given on Sunday. Once in the year, therefore, little notes are sent out to them all, inviting them to attend the meeting of parents. A day is carefully chosen, when they are least likely to have other engagements. The greater number of them generally attend. As the meeting occurs only once in a year, and as special invitations have been sent to each of them, they do not like to stay away. When they are assembled, there is prayer offered up for blessing upon themselves, their homes, and children. An earnest address is given, of a very homely and practical kind, speaking of their responsibility as parents, and the solemn account they have to give hereafter—pointing out their duties towards their children, suggesting hints for their management and education, telling them of the progress made or the difficulties felt in the Sunday-school work during the last year, interesting them by anecdotes and examples, and arousing them by every means that can be thought of, to be anxious, prayerful, and diligent about the eternal welfare of their little ones.

This meeting produces a strong impression, at the time, at least. The parents go away more touched and softened than by the most eloquent ordinary sermon, and it is to be hoped that lasting results will follow, in the improved tone of the children's



homes and the greater regularity of their Sunday attendance.

Such is the general organisation of our model Sunday-school—by no means perfect, indeed, but, on the whole, one that will be practically useful. Simple, however, as are the wheels of its machinery, they require to be oiled by tact, watchfulness, and constant diligence on the pastor's part, to make them work smoothly; they require the power of the Almighty arm to make them work at all.

With two observations I shall conclude these lengthy chapters on the teaching of children.

The first is, that it is well often to remember what we felt when children ourselves. Let us try to recall, as vividly as we can, the impressions made on us, the emotions felt, and the general tone of our thinking, wishing, hoping, and fearing, in those long past days. Those dim visions of old times, that float over our memories, in misty procession, fading more and more into indistinctness, as we leave that dream-like childhood further behind—let us seize them before they pass quite away, and paint them in lasting colours on our intellects, so as to have them preserved there when memory ceases to reproduce them. Thus we shall possess the surest clue to children's hearts. Our grown-up sympathies, though ever so tender,

cannot put us into unison with their feelings. We shall have no delicate intuition of what passes through their hearts, we shall misunderstand them, and so mismanage them, unless the remembrance of our own childish emotions correct the bluntness of our perceptions as full-grown men.

The other observation is, that we must not expect too much from children. We must not expect from them that steadiness, that conscious strength of purpose, that consistency of feeling and action, that we look for in men and women. They will be children still, however we teach them. Their hearts will be more or less light, volatile, open to the impressions of the moment. We may see in their conduct much to distress us, to disappoint, to shock us, and yet all the while the seed may not have been sown in vain. God's grace may be working surely, though slowly, in their hearts. Those children whom we see in their play-ground so apparently reckless of everything but the moment's enjoyment; those boys and girls, whose silly tricks, and laughs, and whispers, have troubled us so sorely in church and school, may yet, in spite of all their lightness and inconsistency, be recognised by our Lord as young soldiers in His great army—young servants in His wide earthly temple.

## CHAPTER VII.

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### CONFIRMATION—NIGHT SCHOOLS—ASSOCIATIONS OF YOUNG MEN.

THE period of Confirmation is often a turning-point in a young person's spiritual life. It is a pity, therefore, to have the rite administered too early. The mind ought to be well developed, and the feelings of the heart to be no longer mere childish impulses, before the solemn engagements of Confirmation are entered into. What mere children boys are at fourteen! How little seriousness of feeling or steadfastness of purpose can be expected from them at that age! If they are then brought to Confirmation, one of the most favourable opportunities in their whole lives for deeply impressing their conscience, and awakening them to earnestness in religion, is almost lost. They come forward full of childish pleasure at the excitement and importance of the occasion, ready, in their eagerness to be admitted, to make any promise that may be required. They are perhaps temporarily awed by the solemnity of the service; but before a week has elapsed, every

serious impression has faded away from their volatile minds. As a rule, then, boys should never be admitted to Confirmation before sixteen or seventeen. The feelings of girls' minds mature rather earlier than they do with boys; where great anxiety for Confirmation is evinced, they may perhaps be admitted somewhat sooner.

If teaching and catechizing have been carefully carried on in the parish, no great amount of intellectual preparation is needful for Confirmation. A young person well-instructed in the Scriptures, in the doctrines of our Church, in the nature of the sacraments, in the main principles of Christian faith and practice, is fully prepared, as far as knowledge goes, to be confirmed as soon as he is old enough for it. But great attention must be paid to the moral and spiritual preparation for the rite. The young people should be taught to look upon it as a grave epoch in their life. The solemnity of the promises they are about to make before God and the congregation, and the awfulness of making them lightly, should be seriously impressed upon them. Every endeavour should be made so to fill them with a sense of the deep reality of the vows and engagements they are about to take on themselves, that if they are not thoroughly in earnest in their feelings on the subject, they should not dare to come forward.

No matter how well the ordinary machinery of the parish is worked, special classes for a few months previous to the Confirmation ought to be held. In every parish there are some growing up young people, who, from one cause or another, cannot be induced to attend the ordinary classes regularly. The stimulus of the approaching Confirmation will often bring these absentees to the special classes. Their motives may be very mixed and unworthy. It may partly be the excitement of the occasion, partly the idea that being confirmed will be of some temporal benefit to them, partly the desire to do as every one else does, that induces them to attend ; but the result is, that they come under the pastor's instruction. He has an opportunity (which otherwise he would scarcely ever have) of speaking to them, pleading with them, warning and teaching them. The opportunity earnestly made use of, at such a critical period of their lives, may result in a complete change in their characters.

Besides, even for those who do attend ordinary means of instruction, the special classes are useful, as a special tone of teaching is required for so special an occasion. In the first lecture, the meaning and objects of Confirmation, and the general drift of the promises to be renewed in it, should be plainly set forth. The young people should be called on to understand that the present is a time for taking

a decided stand in religion—that they must no longer halt between two opinions—that they must make up their minds boldly whom they intend to serve. They should be urged to special prayer and self-examination on the subject of their decision. They should be warned against coming to Confirmation as a matter of course, and distinctly told that if, when the time arrives, they feel they cannot with truth declare their earnest intention to be the Lord's servants, they must stay away from the service, and not profane it with unmeaning or false promises. Care must be taken, however, not to raise unnecessary scruples in sensitive minds. The love and tenderness of the Saviour—His sympathy with human infirmity—His readiness to receive even the feeblest believer—the fulness of the pardon through His blood for all omissions as well as faults—the mighty help of His Holy Spirit to all praying hearts—these subjects should be so dwelt on as to encourage the timid, and prevent them from being repelled by a morbid sense of their own weakness.

In the succeeding lectures, there should be a detailed explanation of the baptismal promises, making each of them be felt in its practical reality, showing its application in the details of daily life, and so pressing it home to the consciences of the candidates, as to make them realize what is implied in engaging to fulfil it. The nature of the Lord's Supper also—

the obligation to receive it regularly—the qualifications for worthy participation in it, should be carefully brought before them. Studying the Communion Service, and comparing it with the Scriptures, is, perhaps, the best method of doing this. Some short portion of Scripture, bearing on the particular subject of the lecture, might be set each day as a lesson to be prepared and thought over against the next day. Very frequently during the course of the lectures, the topics spoken of the first day should be touched upon again. The necessity of decision and steadfastness, accompanied by humility, prayer, and trust, should be pressed on the candidates so repeatedly and earnestly, as to influence the whole tone of their thoughts about Confirmation. And very full of affectionate anxiety should be the pastor's manner while carrying on these lectures. The young people should be made to feel, by the evident intensity of his desire to stir up their hearts, that it is no common event they are preparing for. And when this is so, the electric power of sympathy will awaken a corresponding anxiety in themselves. Seeing him so deeply moved, their own emotions will be kindled; and when, at the end of the lecture, he kneels down along with them to beseech Almighty God to pour His Spirit upon them abundantly—to grant that every one of them may be brought into the Saviour's fold, and kept there securely—to give them love

and decision and holy boldness to make their promise—to give them humility and watchfulness and prayerfulness, so that they may be able to keep it, and to lead them by His almighty arm, through all the toils and temptations of life, to His glorious and peaceful Home;—doubtless, as so he prays with them and for them after his moving exhortations, few of those young hearts will not be bowed down along with him in prayer, and few will rise from their knees without being softened as well as strengthened by those moments of fervent communion with their Father in heaven.

Before finally admitting a candidate to Confirmation, it is very important to have at least one private interview with him. Here the subjects brought generally before the class in the lectures, can be pressed upon him individually. Questions as to his spiritual state, can be directly asked, and answers insisted on in a way which in ordinary interviews the pastor would scarcely have a right to do. Now, however, that he is going to send him forward to pledge himself so solemnly to God's service, he is not only entitled, but in duty bound, to make the most searching inquiries, and to expect the most unequivocal answers as to his feelings, resolutions, and habitual conduct. It is often well, where there seems dulness and vagueness in religious ideas, to exact promises, or declarations of resolution, as to



definite particulars of external duty—such as daily reading of the Bible, daily prayer, regular attendance at the Communion, &c. And this suggests the remark, that might seem almost unnecessary were it not that experience shows the expediency of pointing attention to it—viz., that no one should be admitted to Confirmation who does not intend immediately to be, and regularly to continue, a communicant. It is manifest that the preparation necessary for both rites is identical, and that he who feels he is not yet fit for the one, is not yet fit for the other either.

After the Confirmation, the pastor should strive not to lose sight of the young people who have been confirmed. He has a hold over them that he has not over the elder parishioners. They have made distinct promises to him; they have spoken to him about their resolutions and intentions. He should try to keep up this hold; he should watch over their performance of their promises, and question them often as to the carrying out of their resolutions. The Communion will afford him a most important opportunity for doing this. Their regularity or irregularity in attending it, will furnish him with a test—by no means a perfect test, and he would be liable to grievous mistakes if he thought so—but, to a certain degree, a test of their steadfastness or vacillation. If he sees them negligent in their

performance of this duty, he has some tangible ground on which to address them ; and beginning by contrasting their present practice with their former resolutions on this point, he can lead on the conversation to their general spiritual state, and warn them, rouse them, or enlighten them, as the case requires.

The young people who have been confirmed ought not to be considered as having no longer need of Sunday-school instruction. In parishes where the Sunday-school is well worked, it will have gained such a hold upon the affections of the pupils that the majority of those who have been confirmed will continue to attend it, perhaps for years afterwards. It is sadly common, however, to find that, in spite of the pastor's endeavours, many of those who, being least interested in religious instruction, really need it most, gradually drop away from the Sunday-school soon after the Confirmation. This is especially the case with the elder boys, or rather young men. How to keep the young men under pastoral influence, and under religious instruction, has always been a problem which earnest ministers have been most anxious to solve. Of all classes in the parish, they are exposed to most temptations, and are most likely to be drawn into gross external evil ; and yet from their having ceased to attend schools, and Sunday schools, and being generally too busied at work of various

kinds to see much of the pastor in their homes, they are the class which it is hardest for him to reach. While strong human passions are beginning to make themselves felt with unwonted power, and the coarse words and example of evil companions are familiarizing them with vice, and taking away their childish horror of it, and while the independence and pride of their newly-acquired manhood are making them disinclined to submit to parental authority—just at this dangerous time the pastor is apt to lose sight of them.

In rural parishes this difficulty may be partly met by the instrumentality of *night-schools*. In such parishes there are generally a number of lads who, from the combined influence of busy employment in agricultural work, and boyish dislike to books, have grown up almost to manhood in a state of very great ignorance. They now begin to feel the disadvantage of knowing so little, and are anxious to make up for lost time. Sometimes the parish schoolmaster, or else some “good scholar” of their own class, sets up a night-school as a private speculation. For two or three hours every evening during the winter months, the room, whether in school or cottage, is crowded with young farm labourers, and even farmers’ sons. In their anxiety to better themselves, they gladly give their twopence a-week, and spend the long, dark, winter evenings in learning instead of idling.

Now here is an opportunity ready-made for the pastor. He has only to devote an hour or so once or twice a week to this little school, in order to gain access to the very class he wants to reach. He can go in among them, sit down by their side, teach one how to hold his pen, look over the simple sum of another, hear a third his reading-lesson—encourage, interest, help, stimulate them all. Then he can give a short Scripture lesson, in a telling, hearty, practical tone, such as the youths will understand and sympathize with, concluding with a few words of earnest prayer.

If a night-school of this kind is not voluntarily established in the parish, the pastor can easily set it a-going. The weekly payments will be generally sufficient to compensate the teacher for his trouble; if the parish is too poor for this, the minister must try to make up a small sum to assist in establishing so useful an institution. It is hard to calculate how strong a hold may thus be gained on the young men's hearts, and how blessed an influence may be exercised over their characters.

This instrumentality, however, is very limited in its sphere of operation. It reaches only one class, and that the lowest class, of young men. But the more educated young men have the same temptations to contend with as they have, besides peculiar ones of their own. Their education, while

it does not lift them above the grosser forms of vice, puts them within reach of the more subtle dangers of self-conceit and scepticism, as well as of the debasing influence of a large class of the cheap literature, which now too often supplies the place of Bible reading on Sundays.

Some means, then, of reaching the young men generally, from the lowest to the highest, is wanted—some instrumentality to counteract the dangers to which all alike are subject, and to help onwards and upwards both the little educated and the highly educated. If a plan could be devised for gathering all the young men of a parish into a holy brotherhood—for bringing them as one body into close and cordial fellowship with each other and with their pastor—for uniting them as a compact phalanx in the battle against evil—for interesting their minds, enlarging their understandings, and enlightening their souls,—a great void in our parochial system would be filled up. Exactly such an instrumentality is supplied by “Young Men’s Associations.” These Associations have become one of the most marked features in the increased earnestness of religious effort within the last few years. They are no longer an experiment; they are a triumphant success. In almost all our large towns, such associations, affiliated one with another, have sprung up, have rallied round them the great body

of our intelligent youth, and have become the centres both of intellectual and religious activity in the neighbourhood.

Amidst minor differences in detail, the constituent elements of Young Men's Associations are almost everywhere substantially the same. The small subscription—the room hired, furnished as a reading-room, and supplied with the better class of papers and periodicals—the library of useful and entertaining books gradually got together—the regular Bible class—the periodic public lecture on improving subjects,—these form the general framework of the institution, capable of indefinite expansion, from the unpretending village association, with its ten or twenty members, to the vast central city society, with its hundreds of members, its classes and lessons in all departments of literature, and its lectures delivered by the leading nobles and statesmen of the land.

It would be presumptuous in such an Essay as this, to offer any suggestions to the excellent Associations already in operation, managed by active and intelligent committees, and superintended by experienced clergymen. A few hints as to the forming and carrying on of such Associations, in rural parishes and small country towns, may not, however, be without use.

And first, I would say that it is well not to be too

ambitious as to the style of thing to be got up in the beginning. Do not undertake more than you are sure of being able to accomplish. Do not think it necessary that your society should immediately have all the agencies other societies have. Do not be too anxious to draw up an imposing programme which will look well in print. Never mind subscriptions, and reading-rooms, and libraries, for the present. Begin with something easily and thoroughly practicable—something unpretending and yet really useful, from which you may be able to develop other things by-and-by.

And far the best thing to begin with is a Bible Class for young men. Go round to all the young men in the town, village, or neighbourhood, and invite them to meet you on a certain evening in the week in the school-room or in your own house, for the study of the Scriptures. If you can get this Bible Class to work pleasantly, one of the chief objects of an Association is attained: you have the young men of the parish rallied round their pastor, interested in studying the Word of God with him and with each other; religious influences are brought to bear regularly on their minds; the idea of Christian fellowship between them as a Class is originated, and a strong foundation is laid for further sympathy, union, and co-operation in the future. The carrying on of this Class successfully requires the exercise of

all the pastor's energy and judgment. It will contain very diverse elements, from the smart foreman of the village shop, down to the journeyman blacksmith or the ploughboy. The younger gentlemen of the parish should, if possible, be included in it also. Now, to make the teaching interesting to the highest, and yet intelligible to the lowest of these, is no easy matter. All must be treated as men, and yet many are as ignorant and simple as children. There must be conversation and discussion, and yet there must be no argument or unprofitable talking of loquacious members. Questions must be asked, and yet the ignorant must not be put to shame, nor the shy abashed. Free expression of opinion must be encouraged, and yet self-conceit and ostentation must be kept down. It may seem a poor kind of help to mention so many difficulties; but I believe that being aware of the difficulties, is one great step towards overcoming them. The style of teaching by which you will combine the greatest number of advantages with the fewest disadvantages, is a happy medium between direct questioning and general conversation. Direct questioning is too stiff for the purpose. The more ignorant also are frightened by questions, and the fear of disgracing themselves is apt to keep them away from the meeting. "Shall we have to answer questions?" I have often heard asked by fine honest, though illiterate young men.



when invited to attend a Class of the kind. General conversation is almost sure to become desultory and useless; perhaps, indeed, worse than useless, as those who imagine themselves learned and clever are apt to take up the time of the meeting in showing off their acquirements, thereby injuring their own characters, and stirring up among the others a mischievous ambition to distinguish themselves in like manner.

Something between the two, then, you must aim at. After the portion of Scripture has been read, (and even in this your delicate tact must be on the watch, as some of your Class may be ashamed of reading aloud,) you had better take each clause yourself, and suggest various questions about it. These questions should be put to the Class generally, for any one that pleases to answer. When several answers are given, encourage each answerer by showing the germs of truth and points of interest there are in what he says, even though not altogether correct. Balance the different answers together. If your question is a good one, it will draw out various opinions, all of which may be made to bear on the clearing up of the point. Much interest may be excited by the comparison of these opinions, by getting the answerers to explain their views, or answer objections to them, and thus bringing on a short and lively conversation on the subject. Make

each clause, or each principal subject in the passage, act thus as a ground for questioning, discussing, and conversing; pleasantly but firmly keep the speakers to the point, and prevent them from rambling; check all tendencies to long arguments or irritating contradictions; and when the clause has been long enough under consideration, sum up what has been said, give your own view, and speak a few serious and impressive words on the spiritual truth or the practical lesson conveyed in the passage.

At first you may find it hard to get up any great animation or life in the meeting. The young men will probably be shy and awkward, on account of not being accustomed to anything of the kind: you will have to bear the chief burden of the conversation yourself, and you will be afraid of the whole affair being too heavy for success. But all this will soon wear off. As the charm of novelty fades away, your numbers will perhaps somewhat diminish; but those who remain will begin to express themselves more freely; stiffness and formality will pass off; a feeling of companionship and cordiality will begin to diffuse itself through the little gathering, and it will gradually approach nearer and nearer to the nature of an "Association." I have never known an instance of a young men's Bible Class being tried by an affectionate pastor, without its meeting with a considerable measure of success.

When your Bible Class is firmly established, and is a real practically working institution, you can feel your way towards expanding it. An element of variety may first be brought in by getting the members to send in, during the week, written questions on any difficulty that may occur to them—hard texts, puzzling arguments, or objections they may have heard against true religion, and such like, which questions can be discussed and answered at the meeting. Afterwards simple lessons on Christian Evidences,\* or on the Roman Catholic controversy, or Church History, or Prophecy, or any interesting and useful subject, may be introduced. If there be a sufficient number of intelligent young men, the writing of short essays may be tried, to be read and conversed on at one meeting in the month.

The greatest care, however, must be taken in bringing in these new elements, not to make your meeting so learned in its character as to drive away the ignorant members. Do not let them feel out of their depth. Let there be in every meeting something simple and practical enough to do good to the ploughboy, and to encourage him to come and be gradually refined and elevated by what he hears. Exert yourself much to keep up the interest of this lower class; for in these efforts for mutual

\* Whately's "Introductory Lessons on the Evidences" are admirably adapted for this purpose.

improvement it is a most important thing to have the high and low bound together in the bonds of Christian sympathy.

Your meeting is now gradually transforming itself from a mere Class into an Association. An occasional social meeting for tea, after which an interesting book can be read aloud, will help the development. All this while, partly by gifts, partly by subscriptions, a little library may be accumulating. Great facilities are afforded for this by the privileges granted by the Christian Knowledge Association, and also by the number of excellent books that can be bought second-hand from the City circulating libraries.

Occasional lectures can next be tried. Between yourself, your friends, and fellow-clergymen, you will not have much difficulty in arranging a course of them during part of the year at least. They are almost always successful. The public lecture is a particularly popular method of instruction in this country, and the interest excited by the lecture will be, in a great measure, reflected upon the young men's society—will give it a firmer hold as an institution in the parish, and make its members feel a kind of innocent pride in belonging to it.

Thus, without any expensive outlay, any call for subscriptions—(the subscriptions to the library should be voluntary)—without any pomp or fuss of ostentatious beginning to a thing of which the completion

is uncertain, you have got together all the essentials of a "Young Men's Christian Association." You can now, if the circumstances of the place seem to make it expedient, or possible, try to establish the reading-room, periodicals, &c. Subscriptions will, of course, be requisite for this; but it is very desirable that they should not exceed two shillings, or two shillings and sixpence annually from each member. Richer members, who are anxious for the success of the society, can give as large voluntary subscriptions as they please in addition. A lay committee must be formed to undertake the management of the business part of the Association. Admission or exclusion by ballot is the general rule in associations of the kind. I should hesitate much before allowing this rule to be introduced. I have known great injury done, great bitterness produced, and great limitation caused to the usefulness of the institution, by the exercise of the power of the ballot by a few exclusive and conceited young men, in an association of considerable size. I should wish, if possible, to have the benefits of the society put upon the same footing as other Church privileges—open to every one who chooses to avail himself of them, provided he be a person of respectable character, and not a "notorious evil-liver." As to the person who has the right to decide who is admissible or inadmissible on these grounds, I do not see why it should not be the same person

who has the authority to admit or exclude in those other Church privileges—namely, the minister of the parish. If he is afraid of bearing such a burden alone, it would be better that he should share it with a responsible committee, who should give their votes with justifying reasons, in his and each other's presence, than that the power should be left among the young men in general—the power of secretly inflicting what may be a most serious injury to the eternal interests of an applicant. I give this opinion, however, with all deference to the judgment and experience of those who take a different view. Much, doubtless, can be said in favour of the ballot test. Perhaps the best thing that can be said is, that in vast numbers of cases it works well. It is open to abuse; but as a practical fact it is not very often abused. It is one of those subordinate details which each manager of an association must decide on for himself, according to the best of his judgment.

I need scarcely say that every meeting should be opened and closed with prayer. And care must be taken that this prayer should not be looked on as merely a becoming way of opening and closing the meeting, but should be felt to be in itself an important part of the business of the meeting. Union in prayer should always be impressed upon the young men, as one of the objects of the society. There are carefully drawn-up forms of prayer printed and

published for the use of such societies: these may be used as helps; but I certainly think that the reality of the union in prayer is more easily felt, when the superintending minister, at the close of a conversation on the Bible, makes special petition for guidance and help on the special subjects which have just been occupying the attention of the meeting.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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### PRAYER-MEETINGS.

THE chief prayer-meeting in the "Model Parish" is the Church service. And great care is taken by the pastor to make it be felt to be a real *prayer*-meeting. The service is gone through with deep reverence both of voice and manner. There is not, indeed, any affectation of a pomp and grandeur of ceremonial and an elaborateness of gesture, foreign to the spirit of our reformed Church, and repulsive to the good sense of its members. Neither is there any putting on of theatrical airs and mouthing tones. The minister does not try to be impressive in the prayers. He simply tries to pray them. He tries to realize the work in which he is engaged—praying himself, praying with his people, leading their devotions to the throne of grace. And this realization causes his voice and manner to be reverent, without conscious endeavours to make them so. It is true that, owing to the weakness of the flesh, (and partly, it may be, owing to the inevitable laws of mind, which prevent its trains of associations from being perfectly subject



to the bidding of the will,) his attention sometimes wanders in spite of himself, and his devotion flags. But the constant efforts he makes to recollect himself, to realize what he is doing, and pray from his very heart, give a *habitual* tone of reverence to his reading, which lasts even during his unwilling intervals of mental absence. The responses are answered boldly by the body of the people, instead of by the nasal drawl of the clerk, and the mutterings of a few solitary individuals. This is effected, partly by frequent requests and exhortations on the subject, partly by training the school children to read portions of the service together in a suitable tone of voice, partly by the example of a few of the more earnest and better educated people, scattered here and there, and specially requested to lead the people around them by plain and audible reading.

Much attention is paid to the musical part of the service. The interest of the people is sought to be enlisted in it. There are weekly rehearsals of the psalms and hymns, and all who have an ear and voice are invited to take part in them. Every care is taken to make the singing thoroughly congregational singing—simple, warm, devotional, and inspiring. Explanations of the service are occasionally given, both in the pulpit and elsewhere, so that the people may enter into its spirit, understand its beauty, value it, and join in it.

By these and such like means, warmth and life are imparted to the Church service. The coldness, of which it is often accused, is shown to be attributable only to cold worshippers and cold ministers. It is made to be felt as what it is in truth—the most noble, the most soul-stirring of all human vehicles for carrying up the prayers and praises of a congregation to Almighty God.

But beautiful as is the regular Church service, it does not meet all the devotional wants of our people. And it is no disparagement or dishonour to it to admit that such is the case. It answers its own purpose magnificently; but no one form of words can be conceived capable of answering every purpose. And surely it would be superstitious reverence to the words in which our fathers expressed their petitions to God, to imagine that we ought never to express them publicly in any other. There is a desire now generally felt by pious people for some mode of united prayer, not *instead* of our Liturgy, but besides it; for something shorter and more flexible, less fixed and stately. This want is supplied by what are commonly called prayer-meetings. The people enjoy such meetings; they feel warmed and cheered by them: if they do not find them in their own Church, they are apt to seek for them in dissent. Some zealous Churchmen are suspicious of instrumentalities of this kind. They see them used by

Dissenters, and therefore they fear there must be a dissenting element in them—something about them alien from the spirit of our Church.

One must respect conscientious scruples that arise from sincere attachment to the Church of our fathers; but it is a pity that such scruples should interfere with the edification of Christ's people. And after all, is it not a weakness to mass together the instrumentalities used by Dissenters, and involve them in one common feeling of suspicion? A means may be employed by Dissenters, and yet have in it none of the evil elements of Dissent. And I suppose every one will allow, if he analyses his feelings, that it is these evil elements he means to condemn, and not the mere bugbear of a name, when he expresses his disapprobation of anything as "Dissenting." It is not in reality the slightest argument against a practice to say that it has been used by people with whom we disagree in many things. Show that it is one of the things on which we disagree; show that it is one of the things in which we believe them to be wrong; until this is done, there is no proof that it is not one of the things in which they are right. So of prayer-meetings. Show us that there is necessarily connected with them undue excitement, fanaticism, disorder, false doctrine, or any of the recognised evils of Dissent, and then there is reality in the accusation of their being dissenting; show us merely

that the Dissenters use them, and the charge is but empty sound.

And if they have been used successfully by the Dissenters, why has it been so? Not because they are congenial to dissenting feelings, but simply because they are congenial to the feelings of human nature. The familiarity, the variety, the freedom of prayer-meetings, have an attraction for one phase (if I may use the expression) of man's heart, just as the majesty, the sublimity, the chaste severity of our Liturgy have for another. Why should we not make use of both attractions? Because we consider the one as the higher, is that any reason why we should despise the lower? Because the most refined, and perhaps the most spiritually advanced minds can follow with more perfect sympathy the known words of our service than any extempore prayer, should we on that account refuse the extempore prayer to those whose devotion is more easily called out by it than by a Liturgy? No: we have room enough for both agencies. There is no rivalry between them. What we want is to help our people to pray—to stir up in them a devotional spirit. We dare not waste our time in jealous comparisons between the different means of effecting this. We must use all means—all means that we know to be lawful, and find to be expedient; sure that when a fervent prayer has been breathed up to our loving Father, He will receive it

with equal favour, and answer it with equal certainty, whatever may have been the words that bore it to Him.

But, it is objected, we ought to "educate our people up to the Liturgy," rather than pander to their desires, by supplying them with prayer-meetings. Such words sound plausible, but they are in fact unreal. The natural feelings of the great mass of the people cannot be educated away. And alienating them from the Church, and making them look for fuller understanding of their wants, and warmer sympathy with their feelings among Dissenting bodies, is a poor kind of education. And why should the word "pandering" be used in the matter? Does not the very word carry with it a "*petitio principii*"? It can only be used with correctness where the feeling yielded to is a wrong feeling. And this is the very question at issue. We deny that there is anything wrong, or even unhealthy, in the desire for the simpler and freer devotion of the prayer-meeting. We maintain that it is the natural feeling of vast numbers of plain and unsophisticated Christians, and that it is as absurd to speak of "pandering" to it, as of "pandering" to the hunger of a starving man by giving him food.

And further: if prayer-meetings are largely made use of by Dissenters, they are largely used in our own Church also, and are as closely interwoven with

the working of a great section of it, at least, as with that of any separating body. And when a meeting is conducted by a minister of the Church, attended by members of the Church, and taught according to the doctrines of the Church, that must be a very strained kind of Churchmanship which would suspect it, as identical with, or leaning to, Dissent. All these objections against new efforts and new instrumentalities, on the score of Church principles, seem to me to arise from confused ideas of what the Church is—from ignoring its present life—from forgetting that it is a body of living men, and not merely a reflection of dead men's opinions. Hence it is that nothing is allowed to be consonant with the "spirit of the Church," with "Church feelings," "Church principles," &c., unless it can be found mentioned within the covers of a book written three hundred years ago. Doubtless this is perfectly true with regard to *doctrine*, as truth is eternal and immutable; but the fallacy is in applying the same rule to modes of action and tones of feeling, which, in a living body, must ever be varying, according to the varying circumstances in which that body is placed. Once realize that the laymen and clergymen who are now living, speaking, acting, and writing in its communion, are the "Church of England," in as real a sense as the men who were represented in Convocation centuries ago, and you

will feel that it is not in the words of the Prayer-book alone that you are to look for "the spirit of the Church." True, in that book alone have we any *authoritative* expression of the Church's feeling. With regard to the various modes of action that circumstances have called forth since it was written, the Church, as a body, has expressed no opinion either of approbation or disapprobation. But if we believe the Church to be "a congregation of faithful men," and if vast numbers of the earnest, exemplary, and widely respected among those faithful men, agree in employing and approving any given instrumentality, great caution should surely be used before speaking of that instrumentality as alien from the spirit of our Church.

A question has been raised as to the *legality* of prayer-meetings—as to whether a clergyman is not bound by the law of the land to use the Church service, and none other, whenever he prays with his people. This question, being a lawyer's question, could scarcely be discussed here. Custom, however, which in our country soon assumes the force and the right of law, seems to have decided it pretty clearly already. At all events, in every diocese, whatever practice on the point is sanctioned or allowed by the Diocesan, may safely be looked on by the clergy as perfectly legal to them.

The machinery of prayer-meetings is so simple, that little or nothing need be said upon it. It generally consists of the singing of one or two hymns, the reading and exposition of portions of Scripture, and extempore prayer. The practice, now often introduced, of beginning the prayer-meeting with the Litany, has many advantages. The Litany, with its responses warmly answered, is a most spirit-stirring and comprehensive prayer. The use of it takes away from the mental strain on the minister, which would be caused by conducting the whole service of the meeting in his own extemporaneous language. It brings in a useful element of variety; the frequent responses relieving the monotone of the rest of the service. It helps to attach the affections of the worshippers to the Liturgy, and prevents them from imagining that the minister is glad to dispense with its use whenever he can. Besides it makes the service more thoroughly a Church service. The Litany, hymns, an exposition of Scripture, followed by an extempore prayer, make up a thoroughly orthodox form of worship. Even very strict rubricians admit the legality and propriety of such a service.

The chief things to be aimed at in prayer-meetings are brevity and warmth. The readings should be short, the expositions short, and the prayers short. The most common complaint made against the Church



service is its length : if the prayer-meeting is long too, it has the fault of the other, without its beauties. The expositions of Scripture should be in a more familiar style, and more nearly approaching a conversational character, than would be suitable in the pulpit. Among those who attend the prayer-meeting, the proportion of real servants of the Lord may be expected to be larger than in the Sunday service in church. This should have its influence on the tone of the expositor. It should be more of a feeding the flock—less of a seeking for the lost. It should be more explanatory than hortatory. Showing the meaning, the force, the beauty of God's Word, should occupy more time than the urging home of its lessons. This latter should also be done, but it should have a more subordinate place than in the regular sermon.

The conducting of extempore prayer is such a very important part of the pastor's work, not only in the prayer-meeting, but on countless other occasions also, that it calls for a few special observations.

The minister has two objects to fulfil in extempore prayer : he has both to *express* and to *direct* the feelings of his fellow-worshippers. He has to express to the Lord the wishes he knows they actually do feel. At the same time, he has to lead them, and help them to feel the desires most suitable to them

on the occasion, and so to carry their devotions along with his own into the direction towards which they ought to be borne. These two objects the leader of prayer should keep constantly before him. His present duty is not to pray for the people, or to pray before the people, but to pray *with* them. He has not to express his own feelings, and to pour out his own prayers; he has to direct and express *theirs*. If in his prayer he tries chiefly to say to the Lord what he feels in his own heart, it may be listened to and admired by the people, but it is not likely to be *prayed*. Sympathy with his fellow-worshippers, therefore—an understanding of their wants, a throwing himself into their feelings—this is the most essential requisite for a leader of extempore prayer.

There are some common faults in the mode of conducting extemporaneous devotions, that suggest two or three simple cautions.

1. It is a wrong use of prayer to make it a vehicle for *exhortation*. Prayer should be always prayer, not preaching. It is an address to God, not to man. Many of the prayers one hears, are only sermons thrown into another form. One cannot help feeling that the person conducting the service is trying to do good to the people by the prayer—trying to impress upon them truths he wishes them to believe—views he wishes them to think of. It is quite right that this should be done in its proper way, but it is not

right that prayer should be used as a pretext for doing it. Speaking to God is too solemn a thing to be turned into an instrument for speaking to man. A pastor who feels within him the desire to benefit his people, so continually that it has become almost an instinct of his nature, needs to watch carefully against this temptation. The best way of doing so is to realize that he is indeed praying—that he is lifting up his own and his people's petitions to Almighty God, and that that great and glorious Being is stooping down to listen to each word he says. This will cause reverence and reserve in his prayer. It will not cramp its freedom, but it will drive away from it everything that is not really prayer. All sentences meant only for man's hearing, it will silence. It will check, not only the vulgar desire to "make a fine prayer," but also the more insidious temptation to make the prayer "edifying."

2. *Rambling* in prayer must be avoided. It is painful to hear some men wandering on in an unmeaning way from subject to subject; distracting the attention and wearying the mind by the variety of matters touched upon, but not dwelt on. A prayer that is to help the devotions of the worshippers, should have order and arrangement in it. Each separate subject of desire should be brought forward deliberately, and fully spoken of at the throne of grace before the next is mentioned.

3. Closely connected with the last fault, is an appearance of *uncertainty* as to what to pray for. The mind is often kept in a very distressing state of suspense by the long, roundabout sentences, which seem to show that the minister, when he begins them, is not sure how he will finish them. They appear only meant to give time to think of what he is going to say next; and in all probability, so they are. He does not know exactly what he is going to ask for; and the necessity of saying something, drives him to these wordy, meaningless forms of speech. Far better would it be never to attempt to pray extempore, than to be led into such a humiliating position.

The remedy against this fault is never to pray without having some definite desire to express. Consider what is wanted, and then tell your Lord of that want. It is well before you kneel down, to run over rapidly in your mind the chief points on which you wish to petition your Father. These points will then be impressed on your memory as you pray, and one by one you can bring them before the Lord. After Scripture exposition at a meeting, or after any religious conversation, the particular subjects just spoken of, and the desires connected with them, are the most suitable to be brought forward in prayer. The prayer should be a kind of *résumé* of the conversation. The topics to which

attention has been so lately called, are those on which the freshest interest is likely to be felt; with regard to them, therefore, the prayers of the listeners will flow forth most readily.

An observation, however, that was made on the subject of preaching, may here be repeated, viz., that underneath all the varieties of feeling in the human heart in varying circumstances, there are some strong feelings and some deep wants always the same. Owing to this, there must be sameness, as well as variety, in the subjects of sermons; there must be sameness, as well as variety, in the subjects of prayer also. What those constant, deep wants are, will occur too readily to every awakened mind for it to be needful now to enlarge upon them.

4. The manner and tone in prayer should never be *ranting*, or excited. The ministers of the Lord are not to be like the priests of Baal, working themselves into religious fury. Calmness, sobriety, and reverence, become those who are in the presence of the Holy God. "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." But the deepest fervour, the most intense and even passionate earnestness, are perfectly compatible with this reverential quietness. Indeed both results will be produced by the same cause—namely, the feeling of the reality of prayer. Feel that your God is listening to you, and the tone of your voice, and the bearing of

your manner, will be stilled and solemnized in child-like awe. Feel that your God is listening to you, and will surely answer you, and the deep, longing desires of your heart for your own and your people's good, will pour forth in a flood of prayer, as mighty and irresistible in the force of its current as it is calm and unruffled in the quietness of its surface.

Before passing on from the subject of prayer-meetings, I should wish to recommend very strongly, for country parishes, the use of those simpler prayer-meetings generally called "cottage lectures." The name describes the work. Indeed the instrumentality is so well known that it requires no explanation. In each distant district of your parish, select some central cottage that has a good-sized parlour or kitchen. On a fixed evening in the month or fortnight, get the neighbouring cottagers to assemble there. Give them a plain, practical little lecture, accompanied by a hymn and prayer. Talk to them as simply as possible; use the most homely illustrations; take as much pains to make them see the meaning of Scripture words, and understand its most fundamental doctrines, as if they were children. Such lectures, if held after work is over, will be almost sure to be valued. Many of the aged, and poor, and ill-clothed, who are either ashamed or unable to go

to church on Sundays, will be present here. By the light of the one dim candle, you will probably see quite a crowd of attentive faces in the little room; and hearts whom you have no opportunity of reaching elsewhere, you may here be enabled to penetrate with your happy message.



## CHAPTER IX.

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### LAY AGENCY.

THE attention of the Church at large is becoming daily more aroused to the importance of enlisting the laity, as fellow-workers with their ministers, in active religious efforts. And the more widely such a feeling spreads, the more healthy will be the state of the Church. We must try to drive away utterly the remnants of the miserable hierarchical ideas of the middle ages—perhaps, indeed, we might rather say of human nature in all ages—the lazy tendency to look upon it as the priest's business to do our religious work *for* us, and thereby save us the responsibility of having to do it ourselves.

At the Reformation we came back to the consciousness that between man's soul and God there can be no mediator but the Lord Jesus. The great truth of God's Word began again to be felt in its power, that the safety of each soul must depend altogether upon its own individual relationship with the Saviour. But the system of vicarious religion, driven out from the region of personal salvation, kept a hold for itself in



the matter of external work for God's glory. In this we flattered ourselves, for a long time, that we could do our duty by proxy. Souls were perishing around, the cry of the poor and the destitute was going up to Heaven against us, abroad and at home we knew there was a mass of ignorance, and misery, and vice, almost untouched by any pious influence, but we satisfied ourselves with thinking that all that was the business of the clergy—that they were to do whatever was to be done, and that our conscience need not be uneasy about that which was their work, not ours. Such, I believe, was the general state of our feelings, as a Church and nation, until the last fifty years or so.

Thank God, there has been a great improvement since then. Both clergy and laity have awakened, as from a sleep. The Lord's ministers have begun to work like men that are in earnest, and the Lord's people have stood beside them to strengthen their hands and help them in their labour. The laity have begun to realise that they are an integral part—in fact the chief part—of “the Church;” that the Church's work is their work; that they will have to bear the responsibility if they neglect the offices of love to the least of Christ's little ones; that, though their ministers may guide and direct them in working, they cannot do their work for them. The abolition of slavery—the vast missionary organisations

now in operation—the numerous societies, and institutions of various kinds, for the temporal and spiritual improvement of our poor—the energetic working of ragged-schools and city missions—the self-sacrificing efforts of private individuals in various and original lines of benevolence, exemplified in such books as “Annals of the Rescued,” “The Missing Link,” “Ragged Homes, and how to mend them,” “English Hearts and Hands,” “The Book and its Missions,” &c., &c.;—all these bear witness to the happy fact, that our laity are beginning to see what they have to do, and are bracing themselves, in good earnest, to do it.

And there is so much to be done that it is absolutely necessary for all hands to be set to work, if any of it is to be accomplished. The minister is weak if left to toil on by himself. If every effort for good in the parish has to be carried on by him alone, his time and energies are soon overtaxed. No single mind, no single body, is able to keep going the numerous agencies which an ordinary parish requires in order to meet the crying wants, both temporal and spiritual, of its people. If the work is to be done effectually many must join in doing it. And much of the work is of a kind that can be done as well by a layman as a clergyman. There are, indeed, parts of the minister's duty (such as the public preaching of the word and the administration

of the sacraments) which no one can share with him, unless duly "called to the holy function;" but many other parts can be joined in with perfect propriety by unordained members of the Church. The more the minister seeks for assistance in these things, where others can help him, the more leisure and energy will he have to bestow on the duties which none but he can perform.

But not only is lay agency required for the better doing of God's work, and for the lightening of the minister's labour; it is also absolutely necessary for the spiritual health of the layman. Religious life is (to say the least) in a very morbid and imperfect state if it does not develop into religious work. Many Christians are sadly dwarfed in their spiritual growth for want of having something to do for the Lord. They become accustomed to dwell too much upon the state of their own souls. They are tormented with harassing doubts and unfaithful fears. The energies, that ought to be spent in working for their Master, are wasted in unprofitable inward exercises and injurious self-questionings. Both for their sakes, then, and for his own, as well as for the Lord's sake, the pastor ought to be anxious to employ the pious laity of his parish in religious work.

In order to effect this, he ought, both in public and in private, often to remind the people of their responsibilities as members of Christ's Church; he ought

to impress upon them the imperative duty of activity in the Lord's service, and the danger and unworthiness of a selfish kind of religion. But, while he does this, he must be very careful to have some work ready for them to do. It does great injury to the moral mechanism to excite an emotion unless there is some practical channel into which that emotion can be turned. If the people hear their pastor continually saying, "You ought to work for the Lord," if their conscience responds to the call, and yet if they can see no definite employment in which to busy themselves, the passive emotion will have been excited in vain—a tendency to feel without acting on the feeling, will have been fostered, and when there really is something to be done it will not be so easy to rouse them to do it. This, in itself, is a reason for having many different instrumentalities for doing good in a parish. They supply employment for those who are anxious to be busy in the Lord's service. In carrying out their various details there is something for everyone to do. The clever and the stupid, the learned and the ignorant, the advanced Christian and the beginner—all may be suitably employed. Teaching in schools and Sunday-schools, district visiting, collecting for missionary associations, managing and helping "penny clubs," "relief funds," "coal funds," "Dorcas societies," "Lending libraries," &c, &c., will furnish work of various kinds for

various characters. Indeed, in a parish where strenuous efforts are made to meet all the temporal and spiritual wants of the poor, and to take part in the labours of love carried on by Christ's Church at home and abroad, the difficulty will be, not to find work for the people to do, but to find a sufficient number able and willing to do what is to be done.

Besides school-teaching, which has been spoken of already, district visiting is the most directly spiritual of the lay agencies generally practicable in a parish. It is extensively used in large cities, and is there producing blessed results. In towns, villages, and country parishes, although not so essential, it is an exceedingly useful system, both to the visitors and the visited. Nothing can be simpler than its machinery. As many religious people as can be got to undertake the office are appointed, each a certain number of houses for a district. The visitor is expected to go round these houses once every month, or two months, as may be agreed upon, in a loving and Christian spirit. He is to try to influence their inhabitants for good, in every way he can. He is to see after their temporal condition, if they are poor—to inquire about their attendance at the means of grace—to see if any among them are sick—to sympathise with them, comfort them, and try, by all possible means, to make them happier and holier. To the aged and infirm in the district he is expected to

pay special attention. At stated periods the visitors meet with their ministers, and with each other, report anything worthy of remark that may have occurred to them during their rounds, join together in prayer, and seek for mutual sympathy and advice.

The principal difficulty generally felt by the visitors is "how to begin"—how to enter the houses without seeming to be intruders—how to open the conversation without awkwardness and apparent impertinence. It diminishes this difficulty to make them bring round tracts, or library books, to be left during one visit, and exchanged at the next. This is something definite for them to do. They have, as it were, an excuse for going to the house. •They are sent by the minister with a tract;—here is an introduction and an opening to the conversation all at once. The subject of the tract also—the people's opinion or impression about it—will often give something to speak about, and lead the way to useful conversation. In some parishes the visitors are discouraged from speaking much upon religion. They are expected merely to look after the material wants of the people, and where they see that spiritual help is needed, to report it to the clergyman, so that he may solely undertake that department of the work. I must say that I entirely disagree with this view of district visiting. It is unnatural in itself, and is founded on a false principle. It is unnatural for a visitor,

who feels that "peace with God, through Jesus Christ," is the "one thing needful," to enter into a family, and interest himself in all their other concerns, and say nothing about that which is nearest to his heart, and ought to be, he knows, nearest to theirs. There is something so forced and strained about this, that all our religious instincts cry out against it. If a man feels strongly the love of his Saviour, the blessedness of pardon through His blood, the happiness of serving Him here, and the joy of looking forward to meeting Him hereafter, who has a right to interfere with his free speaking of what he delights to think of?—who dares silence his tongue when God has made his heart hot within him? No matter what plausible words may be spoken about order and proper functions, is it not only a wretched ecclesiastical narrowness—a clerical "*red-tapeism*"—that would forbid the earnest, ardent Christian from doing more among immortal souls than could be done by a "relieving officer"?

And it is on an essentially false principle that this low view of the district visitor's work is really grounded. It is one of the many forms under which the old "sacerdotal theory"—that remnant of Judaism, taken up and nursed into new life by Popery—is perpetually trying to resume its hold upon us. The layman is to do as much good as he can in his own way, but he is not to meddle with holy

things. That is the priest's business, not his. He must have too much of reverence, too much of awe, to touch the things of God with his unconsecrated hand. The priest will do it for him. A sacred reserve, a religious silence—this, forsooth, is the way in which the layman is 'to show his love and honour to Him who has bought him with His blood.

We who hold that all Christ's people equally are priests, in the sense of offering up continually the spiritual sacrifice of praise and self-devotion, and that none but Jesus is a *ιερεὺς* in any other sense, must raise our protest against any approach to such views, either in theory or in practice. We cordially recognize in Christian ministers a very special authority, and a very noble calling, as ambassadors of God, as entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, and as charged with the feeding and overseeing of Christ's flock; but we also recognize in the Christian laity not only the right, but the duty, of exhorting and comforting each other, and speaking to each other of the things that belong unto their peace, whenever and wherever they have an opportunity of doing so.

On the ground of expediency, however, it is sometimes objected, that young and inexperienced Christians, by talking in an injudicious manner, may, even with the best intentions, do more harm than good. Doubtless they may; and so may young and



inexperienced clergymen, aye! and old and experienced ones also.

Every effort for good can only have a very mingled kind of success, when carried on by imperfect human instruments. But that is no reason these instruments are not to be used. On the whole, the greater number of instruments that are at work, with a sincere purpose of glorifying God and benefiting man, the greater amount of good, even amidst many mistakes and failures, will be done. And after all, much of the evil supposed to be done by injudicious speaking is more imaginary than real. Words that are spoken with an evidently kind intention, and which the listener sees were meant to be of use to him, though they may not be the wisest words possible, seldom do great harm. Certainly, for one person who has been injured by injudicious religious speaking, there are a hundred who have been touched, softened, and benefited by words, which, though weak and ill-chosen, came from a loving heart. A meddling busy-body, indeed, who makes visiting an excuse for prying into other people's business, will most certainly irritate and annoy, and never do good. If the pastor has any insight into character, he will not entrust such a person with a district, but will find for him (or *her*) some other kind of work, in which his energies may have a harmless vent.

But with the average sort of people that are

available for district visiting—well-meaning, sincere Christians, with more zeal often than discretion—with greater anxiety to do good than wisdom in doing it—our plan with such people is, not to silence them on spiritual subjects, but as was done with Apollos, to expound to them the way of God more perfectly. Let us, as far as our own poor wisdom goes, labour to make them wiser. Let us frequently speak to them separately in private, as well as collectively in their periodical meetings; let us question them as to their ways of working, enter into their difficulties with them, advise them, caution them, encourage them, as we see occasion. 'Perhaps we shall sometimes learn more from our visitors than we are able to teach them. Perhaps their fresh hopefulness, their simple faith, their ardent youthful enthusiasm, may kindle our flagging zeal, and revive and refresh our drooping spirits. If our visitors are nearer to the rank of the people in their districts than we are, we may sometimes learn from them facts about the people's condition, that we could have scarcely found out for ourselves. At all events, the more frequent and confidential is our intercourse with these our lay fellow-labourers, the more will the thoughts and feelings and modes of action of all of us be drawn into unison, and the more happy and successful will our common work become.

In touching on the distribution of tracts just now,

I only spoke of it as a convenient opening for the visitor's further efforts; but in itself it is a most useful agency. Many people will read a tract, who would not think of reading a book. Eyes, that have not for years glanced over a page of the Bible, will sometimes be attracted by the look of a new tract. The careless father of the family, coming home from his work, sees it lying on the table; curiosity makes him take it up; owing to the great sameness of their routine life, there is a zest to the poor in anything new, almost as with a child; and so, when he sees the tract is new, he reads it with interest. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he tosses it away, and forgets all about it as soon as it is finished; but in the remaining one case the seed may reach the heart, may grow and germinate there, and bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. Very many there are, I believe, whose first awakening to spiritual life is due, under God, to the effect produced by such an apparently petty instrumentality as a little tract.

A good deal of care should be taken in the selection of tracts. Many of those which are poured forth by some of the tract societies, contain teaching decidedly at variance with the doctrines of our Church. Others, though not exactly false in doctrine, are unhealthy in tone, tending to produce either exaggerated and fanatical religious sentiment, or else perplexity and discouragement, because the feelings

expressed by the writers have not been experienced by the readers. Though, amongst the hundreds of tracts we allow to be circulated, we cannot expect that there should be no sentiment with which we do not fully sympathise, yet we should take trouble to see that no tract goes out under our sanction, the teaching of which is not, on the whole, sound, sensible, and useful.

I have seen it suggested lately, at a Diocesan Synod, that in every parish there should be a special periodical meeting for the arrangement and distribution of the lay agencies—that at that meeting, the various plans and operations of parochial work should be discussed, reports brought in, advice asked, and the work of each person laid out for him. In parishes where there are many little meetings about various minor agencies, such a meeting, in which all the others could be gathered together, might be a simplification of machinery, and therefore a good. The practical instincts of each pastor will probably be able to decide whether, in his parish, a plan of the kind would or would not answer.

But one important caution must be observed with regard to all plans of lay agency; that is, that there should be as little *fuss* about them as possible. Although it is well that there should be a warm “*esprit de corps*” kept up among the fellow-labourers,

yet as little time should be taken up in talking about the work, and as much in doing it; as is consistent with its being done efficiently. The more quietly and simply people can be busy in the Lord's service, the better. Every care should be taken to prevent them from being self-conscious about it, or imagining that they are doing some great thing. A tendency is naturally present in the minds both of the minister and the people to love pomp and show-off, in connection with all they do—to carry on their operations in such a way that they will look well or sound well to spectators—to expect everybody else to be greatly interested in, or warmly to admire, their efforts. This tendency must constantly be watched against. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"—such is the spirit in which we should set about all our endeavours for God's glory. Actual secrecy is not practicable in many of them; but the same unostentatious *spirit*, the same desire simply to do our duty, and to look to God, not to man, for approbation, may and ought to characterize them all.

It is well, also, while speaking of working for the Lord, that the minister should make it clearly understood that those who, on account of the necessary duties of their calling, have no time to give to directly religious works, are not thereby debarred from the service of the Lord—that the conscientious discharge of their earthly duties is their appointed

way of glorifying Him; and that by their prayers, their sympathy, and their contributions, they can join most really in those labours of love to which they are unable to give their time or personal help.

In the remarks on lay agency in this chapter, only voluntary or unpaid agency has been spoken of. But in many large city parishes, and in other places also, much help has been derived from paid lay agency. Scripture-readers and Bible-women, for instance, have done a work among the degraded and almost heathen population of our large cities, which gentlemen or ladies, with the greatest self-devotion, could hardly have accomplished. The extensive and blessed influence exercised by Scripture-readers over the Roman Catholics in large districts of Ireland, is well known to those who have watched the operations of the Irish Society. An important source of the power of such agents, is their familiarity with the modes of life and tones of thought of the lower classes. In order to have this, they must belong to the same class themselves. If we want to have, going about among the ignorant poor, earnest and pious Christians, not far removed from their own rank, and so, able to blend with their lives, and hold intercourse with them on a closer and more intimate footing than we could possibly do, we must pay them

for it. As they are dependent on their work for subsistence, if their time is spent in religious efforts under our directions, we must provide for their bodily wants. It is but a carrying out of the inspired ordinance, that they "who preach the Gospel, should live by the Gospel."

The great difficulty in this agency is the selection of really-qualified men or women for the work. In unpaid efforts, the fact of people's offering themselves for labour which involves trouble without profit, is to a certain degree a proof of their sincerity. There is not much temptation to seek for unremunerative work, unless the heart is interested in it. But here there is something to be gained by working; and in the incessant "struggle for existence," the smallest prospect of gain calls up always a host of needy but unworthy applicants. And it is a sad fact that the poor, amidst all their apparent simplicity, are often advanced proficient in the arts of specious cunning and plausible deceit. It is not easy always to detect the fair-spoken hypocrite, nor to distinguish real piety and genuine zeal from the well-feigned imitations of them put on in order to secure the morsel of bread.

One rule, at all events, should be observed in the selection of paid lay agents, viz., never to entrust any person with such a mission until there have been opportunities of being acquainted with him, and

watching his conduct, for a long period of time. A hasty choice of lay agents is most dangerous.

A caution may here be added with regard to parochial agencies in general. Let the minister be careful not to encumber his hands with more than he is able thoroughly to manage. The mind must not be too constantly on the strain, nor the body too unmercifully wearied; or else health will soon give way, and permanent usefulness be very much impeded. There must be *temperance* in work, as well as in everything else. And sometimes it requires more self-denial, more determined acting on principle, for a minister to bridle his eagerness for activity, and to check himself in putting into operation some plan that seems interesting to him, when he sees that it would be too much for his mental and bodily powers, than it would to labour ever so earnestly in carrying it out.

Meetings, and classes, and lectures, must not be so heaped on one another as to produce a feeling of perpetual hurry and bustle. This would interfere with the pastor's spiritual health, and, through him, act injuriously on the parish. Much of the highest and most important part of his work, requires quiet, meditation, and solitude. A noisy, fussy round of incessant outward activities, would leave him but little of this essential quietness. His whole life,



indeed, must be devoted to his sacred duty; but it must be devoted to it according to a thoughtful, deliberate, conscientious system of division of labour, and judicious alternation of labour and rest—a system which must not be departed from, either on the impulses of idleness, or the impulses of energy.

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## CHAPTER X.

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### RECTOR AND CURATE.

FOR the sake of simplicity, parochial work has been generally spoken of through this Essay, as if carried on by one minister. But in point of fact, in vast numbers of parishes, two or more are associated together. The rector, with his curate or curates, do the duty conjointly. This association of clergymen makes an important feature in our parochial system, and must often modify very considerably the tone and manner in which the individual pastor must work.

Although something may be lost in the way of complete unity of action by the association of several wills and minds in the same spiritual relationship with the people, yet when the rector and curate system is lovingly carried out, far more is gained than is lost. Mutual sympathy and consultation—union in prayer and study—the greater practical wisdom of action that may arise from the conclusions of two or three earnest men viewing matters from slightly different points of view—the freer and closer

intercourse between brother ministers than can exist between ministers and people—these are advantages which far more than counterbalance the disadvantage alluded to. But in order that these advantages should be real, and not ideal, there must be between the men associated together oneness of aim and object—union in spirit as brothers in the Lord, and comrades in the ministry. On both sides there must be loving forbearance, mutual allowance, and generous casting aside of every shadow of jealousy. There is a delicacy in their relationship to one another, as equals in the Lord's sacred ministry, and yet as placed by Providence in different degrees of authority, which, unless there is the magnanimity and affection of real Christian feeling, may easily lead to unpleasantnesses.

A young and zealous curate, when he first comes to a parish, often acts and speaks as if he imagined that nothing had been done there before his arrival. He is full of new plans and new schemes; he looks with contempt on the old arrangements—wants to turn them all upside down, and begin again from the beginning. No wonder if the stationary rector objects to this radical reform, and forbids what he considers unnecessary changes. Then the curate frets and chafes, complains of narrow-minded opposition, looks upon the regular routine work as drudgery, and sets about it, if not sullenly, at least

without heartiness or interest. How different is all this from the spirit in which an humble-minded servant of the Lord should become associated in the holy work of an elder and superior in the ministry! When he enters the parish first, his desire should be to carry on the work already begun, rather than strike out new lines of action for himself. Self should be as little as possible present with him. He does not want to have himself talked about, and his zeal praised, and his plans admired. He only wants to benefit the immortal souls among whom he has been placed. And if his rector is also a minister of the Lord in heart as well as in name, it is by working along with him, and in cheerful submission to his advice, and not by setting himself up in opposition to him, that the grand object of doing good can be best attained. If he cannot help seeing that the work of the parish is being carried on languidly, he must try to give life to it by the affectionate warmth with which he does the duties laid out for him, instead of by wholesale changes, which are not becoming to his subordinate position. He is right to use all loving brotherly influence with his rector to induce him to make improvements that he feels in his heart are wanted; but he must do it with patience, gentleness, and the deference due to his senior and superior. And if the rector will not fall in with his views, there must not be petulance, and

giving up in disgust what can be done, because of what cannot be done. He must remember that the work is the Lord's, not his. His only business is to do what is in his own power. That is the part the Lord has set him; and though his heart may bleed to see how few means are employed to benefit his beloved flock, yet he knows that the Great Shepherd can bless as abundantly as He pleases the instrumentality of those means, feeble as they are. And so his refuge must be, not murmuring and angry complaining, but increased diligence in doing what he is allowed to do, increased fervour in prayer both for rector and people, and increased trust in the Lord's infinite wisdom, love, and power.

But if there are thus temptations and duties on the side of the curate, so are there also on the side of the rector. The rector is, to a certain degree, in a position of authority over the curate. The possession of authority carries with it the temptation to petty tyranny. If the rector is a small-minded man, he is apt to interfere vexatiously with his curate—to deprive him of that degree of liberty of action which, as an educated gentleman and brother clergyman, he is entitled to; and even to assume airs of superiority in his intercourse with him, as unbecoming to good breeding as they are to brotherly feeling.

The rector is also often tempted to be jealous of his curate. The warmth and the zeal of the young

man have, perhaps, won him a large share of the people's affection. His preaching is, perhaps, more attractive than that of the rector—his youthful manner more engaging; and to mere human nature it is hard to see another, and that a newer friend, the chief favourite. Jealousy and irritation are very apt, then, to arise, and to interfere with the cordiality that ought to exist between rector and curate. How sad it is to see the sacred relationship between fellow-labourers in the Lord's vineyard marred by such poor earthly passions. The real minister of the Lord would rather occupy the very lowest position in the Church, than allow such a state of feeling to exist between him and his curate.

The rector is generally the older, and it is to be hoped the wiser, man of the two; he should show his superior wisdom by the forbearance, tact, and good sense, as well as cordial affection, with which he deals with his curate. He cannot expect the curate to be perfect; he is likely to have many faults, especially the faults peculiarly belonging to youth. The rector should be prepared for this, and should gently and kindly try to correct the faults, rather than let himself be annoyed by them. If the curate is full of zeal and impetuosity, he should strive to direct those qualities into useful channels, rather than painfully chill or check them. In everything he should act towards him as an elder to a younger

brother—frankly, warmly, cordially, as well as firmly and wisely. The authority that God's Providence has given him in the parish, he may not, indeed, give up. He is responsible for the work to be done, and so he must decide himself upon the best ways of doing it. But in every fresh decision he ought to consult lovingly with the curate, to give all due weight to his opinions, and, as far as he conscientiously can, to fall in with them. His great desire should be to have unity of thought and feeling between himself and his fellow-labourer, and, in consequence, close unanimity in action. But he must not have Utopian ideas about this unity. He must not expect all individualities of feeling and action to be sunk, and to find the other man working exactly in his groove. Generously and freely he should give to his curate as much liberty of action as is consistent with the order and regularity of his parochial machinery.


And as he is first in position, so he should be first in laboriousness, first in self-sacrifice, first in complete devotion to the work. A miserable degradation of the rector and curate system is it, when the rector leaves to the curate what he considers the drudgery, and takes the more agreeable part of the duty for himself. Who is he, that he should dare pick and choose what parts he likes, and what parts he does not like, in the noble employment of minis-

tering to immortal souls? Fully and equally must he take his share, as far as his strength allows, in every branch of the parochial work. The division of labour between him and his curate is not made for the sake of his ease, but simply in order that the work may be better done. Little respect can he expect to win from his curate, and little influence will he be able to exercise over him, if the latter sees that he lazily shrinks from his bounden duty, and allows the heat and burden of the day to be borne by another. If there is any distinction between the work of the two men, it should be that the rector toils the hardest, takes on himself the most difficult and disagreeable tasks, and is foremost in every effort which requires self-denial, diligence, and perseverance. Of course, all this applies only while the rector is young and strong. As he begins to grow old, he must become more and more the head, rather than the hands. And very beautiful it is to see the grey-haired rector in his declining years, with his curates around him, partly like brothers, and partly like sons. As much work as he is able for, he delights to do; but though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, and the duties that involve bodily fatigue he is gradually obliged (not without many a struggle to bear patiently being so laid aside) to relinquish to his curates. But to them his loving counsel, his ripe experience, and his advanced spi-



rituality are a tower of strength. Their intercourse with him gives an ever-freshening life to their labours. His interest in their work, his sympathy with their difficulties, his advice in their perplexities, take away half the burden of their toil. Though bound down so much by the feebleness of his body, he still works through them. The earnest tone of his spirit communicates itself to theirs. The matured wisdom of his advice directs their efforts. He feels no jealousy of their success, for he identifies himself with them in their labour. It is the souls of his people his curates are striving to save ; it is for them he, too, is praying, yearning, and, as far as he can, toiling. If they are benefited, the desire of his heart is fulfilled, blessed be his God for it. Why should he be jealous because his beloved fellow-labourers meet with a little of that success, of which he longs for them to meet an abundance ? Why should he be jealous because his beloved people find from other hands that help which his can no longer give them, but which his heart still longs and prays that they should have ?

And his younger fellow-labourers know well that he rejoices in their success, and grieves for their disappointments ; and so they freely tell him all that they experience of either. Many are the tales of sin and sorrow, of hope and anxiety, of effort and of failure, that are poured out in his quiet study. That room is like the spiritual heart of the parish, from



which flow forth the strong pulses of ministerial energy, to return again with slower and sadder motion, and be there revived by new hope and cheerfulness and courage. And often in that same study do the old pastor and his young curates bend together over God's Word, and often do they kneel down side by side in earnest supplication; and their blended petitions go up to heaven, that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may pour His blessing abundantly on their own souls, the souls of their people, and His Church universal throughout the world.

The hoary head is a "crown of glory;" and truly, with the aged pastor, whose long years have been spent in labours of love for the souls of others—whose heart, although somewhat wearied with the pilgrimage of life, is still genial, affectionate, and hopeful—whose spirit, although meek and lowly in its estimate of self, is triumphantly confident in the salvation of Jesus—truly upon the noble brow of such a veteran pastor, that crown seems already radiant with so sweet a majesty, that we almost wonder what additional lustre or beauty can adorn the diadem which is laid up for him against the day of his Master's appearing.

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